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Sight and Sound

28
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FILM AND
VIDEO
REVIEWS

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'Being Human'
and the
Hollywood hug**

**Jenny Diski
on gross-out
movies**

**Vangelis and
'Blade Runner'**

**bell hooks on
Spike Lee's
new 'Crooklyn'
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**'Blood Simple' to
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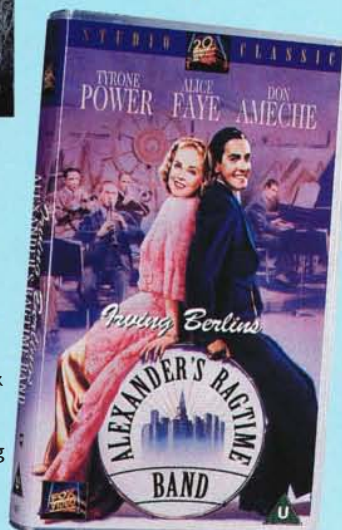
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COVER Photograph of Joel and Ethan Coen by Silvia Otte/Outline/Katz

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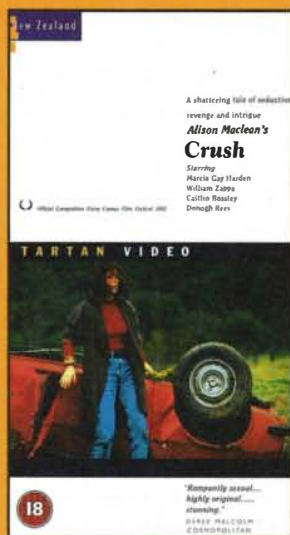
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Dog days

Contributors to this issue

Jenny Diski's latest novel is *Monkey's Uncle*. She has written the script for *Murder in Mind*, a forthcoming BBC Screen One film

Lorraine Gammon is the co-author of *Female Fetishism*

Peter Goodwin has written extensively on broadcasting matters

John Harkness the film editor of Toronto's *NOW* is working on his first novel, *Markers*

Alan Hunter is a freelance journalist and film critic for *Scotland on Sunday*
bell hooks is a feminist theorist and cultural critic whose collection, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* will be published by Routledge in October

Philip Kemp has written a study of Alexander Mackendrick and is writing a biography of Michael Balcon

Shelly Mars is a New York based writer and performance artist
Kobena Mercer teaches at California Institute of the Arts

B Ruby Rich is a San Francisco based critic who is presently visiting Professor, University of California, Berkeley

Bin Zhao is lecturer in Humanities, Wolverhampton University

Audible sighs of relief from the Great and Good have greeted two recent government declarations: the White Paper on the BBC and Michael Howard's 'sensible' amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill, a response to David Alton's campaign on video violence. Consensus has it that in both cases things could have been much worse and that we should be profoundly grateful that the government has acted so reasonably. While things could have been worse, this is hardly grounds for complacency. We shall come back to the future of the BBC at a later stage, and express our doubts about what the White Paper contains. But it seems more pressing at this moment to scrutinise the detail of the Home Secretary's amendment since its effects are likely to be felt quite quickly – and since there has been very little coverage given to the subject.

The core of Michael Howard's amendment is that the British Board of Film Classification should now have the following statutory duty, when deciding whether to give a certificate (or what type of certificate to give) to a video. The Board must: "have special regard (among other relevant factors) to any harm that may be caused to potential viewers or, through their behaviour, to society by the manner in which the work deals with – (a) criminal behaviour; (b) illegal drugs; (c) violent behaviour or incidents; (d) horrific behaviour or incidents; (e) human sexual activity."

Note, first of all, what is on the list and what is not. All the anxiety was about violence, but, with sad predictability, "human sexual activity" has climbed aboard. Mary Whitehouse may have retired but her sorry conflation of sex'n'violence goes marching on. It is equally predictable that what is not on the list is 'discrimination by race, gender or sexual orientation'. Howard's amendment is, after all, the product of a time when ignorant sniping at 'political correctness' is the current intellectual fad.

Predictable they may be, but these inclusions and omissions should be a warning sign that what we are faced with here is not some considered and new response to the ills of the times, but another incorporation into statute of the prejudices of the usual moral minority.

Equally worrying is the use of the word "may", in the phrase "harm may be caused". A central thrust of the argument from the Alton camp is that research demonstrates that video or television violence

does harm. Wrong, say most of the experts on the subject – the research proves no such thing. That word 'may' neatly sidesteps the difficult matter of proof and argument. Will the BBFC now be asked to act on the basis of conjecture and speculation? Alongside this, note the amendment's definition of "potential viewers". It is specified to be "any person (including a child or young person) who is likely to view the video work in question if a classification certificate or classification certificate of a particular description is issued". Since everyone knows that 18 certificate videos will fall into the hands of at least some children, it appears that the Alton demand that no film unsuitable for children should be released on video is, at least on one interpretation of the amendment, likely to end up as law.

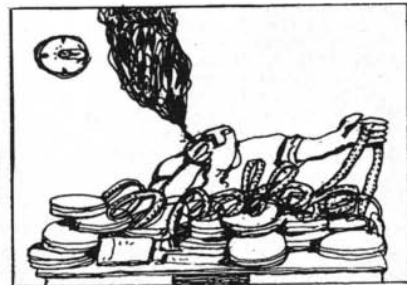
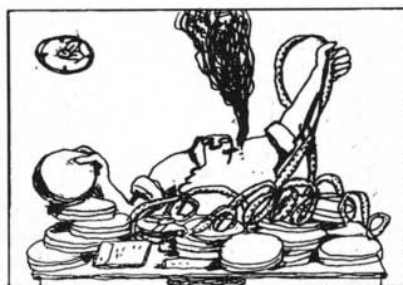
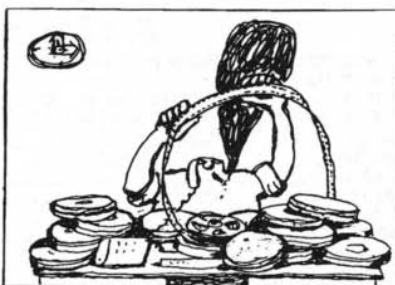
What will the consequences of adopting the amendment be? That will depend on three factors. First, how the judiciary interprets the phrase, "have special regard to"? These are the weasel words of professional drafters. They endeavour to combine Michael Howard's stated desire to give the moral minority an opportunity to pursue judicial review against the BBFC if it is too liberal, with the Home Office civil servants' classic instinct to allow the Board some measure of discretion.

Second, how the BBFC responds to its new statutory remit? The Board prides itself on being both liberal and streetwise. And there is an element of truth in this view. The BBFC is not the Lord Chamberlain, nor is it a secular purveyor of an updated papal index. On the other hand, the BBFC's present streetwise policy is in tatters. Until recently it has tried not to provoke 'the censorious' by foreseeing trouble and withholding certificates from 'difficult' films. Unfortunately, as the success of Alton's campaign shows, this no longer works.

The third factor is the extent to which opponents of the new orthodoxy argue back. Argue back on the big issues of whether the real causes of crime are video nasties or failures and crises in the wider culture. And argue back on the details – shouting loudly when this or that film is banned from video. A modest but useful start would be to encourage the BBFC to release, say, *Reservoir Dogs* on video and argue the case if necessary before the courts, in the sad but likely event of the amendment reaching the statute book.

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The business

● John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Jim Morrison, Manuel Noriega, Eva Perón... what do they have in common – other, that is, than being feet-of-clay twentieth-century myths of a deposed or deceased nature? Answer: they have all been submitted to the dramatic imagination of Oliver Stone, that indefatigable chronicler of feet-of-clay twentieth-century myths and mythologies. The director has, of course, already entertained (some of) us with his revisionist versions of the Kennedy assassination and the Morrison burn-out. Now it's South America's turn.

Or it would have been if Warner Bros had seen eye-to-eye with Ollie on just how much money it was worth spending on the director's proposed biopic of General Manuel Noriega, which was set to start production this autumn with Al Pacino in the title role. Sadly for Stone fans – though happily for that other famous Oliver (North), whose south-of-the-border machinations are understood to have played a major role in Lawrence Wright's *Noriega* screenplay – Warner Bros and the director do not agree on what it's all worth, budget-wise, so the project has been put on hold.

That leaves Stone free to resume his efforts to make a movie version of *Evita*, Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical canonisation of the Argentinian dictatress which has been on-again, off-again for longer than *The Generation Game*. Antonio Banderas looks likely to be cast as Che, with Eva herself played by either Michelle Pfeiffer or a Latin American unknown (a choice which the more cynical among us suspect will be made on budgetary rather than creative grounds).

Casting director Kris Nicolau was spotted in Buenos Aires at the end of last year, and a number of local singers and actors were apparently hired. That, however, was before someone showed the country's president, Carlos Menem, the *Evita* screenplay.

Menem considered its portrayal of historical figures so "caricatural" that he banned Stone from shooting in any public building. Given the kind of spend-a-dollar-get-one-free encouragement Argentina generally gives to US and other productions, this suggests that Stone's fondness for the, shall we say, broader strokes of history remains undiminished.

Speaking of away-day filming, the culmination of the Florida taxpayers' investment in the Sarasota French Film Festival – the choice of the city as a location for a major French film – recently turned a little sour. The festival, launched at the turn of the decade as a sun-drenched showcase for French films in North America, has proved moderately successful at gaining US distribution deals for French movies, and very successful at attracting French film-



Rebels and causes: Can Johnny Depp or Leonardo DiCaprio play James Dean?

makers, French film bureaucrats and French film journalists to spend a week in the sun (it is held in November) at someone else's expense. The original \$1.1 million bill for the event was split between Unifrance, the well-funded and occasionally effective French film promotion body, and the State of Florida, though the latter's share has since been taken over by private sponsorship deals.

But like all film festivals, the Sarasota event's primary purpose has always been promotional: to attract spenders – usually tourists, but in this case free-spending French film companies – to the area, which has not seen the boom in film production that has been happening in and around Miami and Orlando. Imagine the Sarasotans' delight, then, when director Jean-Charles Tacchella – whose bittersweet soufflé 'Cousin, cousine' remains one of the most successful French films ever released in the US – announced plans to make a \$7.5 million comedy there. Better still, it was being produced by Daniel Toscan du Plantier, whose other job is as head of Unifrance.

Shooting on the film – French title, 'Tous les jours dimanche'; English title, 'Seven Sundays' – began this time last year, with a transatlantic cast consisting of Thierry Lhermitte, Maurizio Nichetti, Marie-France Pisier, Molly Ringwald, Rod Steiger and Susan Blakely. All went well until the production returned to France for post-production just before Christmas, leaving unpaid bills estimated at \$200,000, mostly to small suppliers (including the Colony Beach and Tennis Resort Hotel, where the festival is held).

To the creditors' credit, they kept quiet about all of this for six months, assuming that the debts were an oversight. But having received nothing by mid-June, they went public, causing considerable embarrassment to the festival, the film's line producer Jean Bodon, who used to teach film at Florida State University, but not, at the time of going to press, Daniel Toscan du Plantier.

● There are no suggestions of major financial problems at Toscan's Erato Films, one of the most consistently active of French production companies, responsible for most of Maurice Pialat's films, and with the FF 50 million Pierre Schöndorffer film *Typhon* currently in the pipeline.

Sadly, the same cannot be said for Belbo Films, the go-ahead Paris-based production company run by Dutch producer Ludi Boeken and French director Jacques Fansten, which recently called in the receiver. Belbo's credits include Fansten's *La Fracture du myocarde* and Robert Altman's *Vincent and Theo*.

More surprising is the recent announcement of a financial crisis at Anatole Dauman's Argos Films. Set up in 1949, Argos' production credits read like a history of post-war cinema: *Hiroshima mon Amour*, *La Jetée*, *Masculin féminin*, *Au hasard Balthazar*, *Empire of the Senses*, *The Sacrifice*, *The Tin Drum*, *Wings of Desire*... Recent reports suggested that Wenders and Dauman had fallen out, but then falling out with people is something that happens fairly frequently to Dauman, whose temper is legendary. It now looks, however, as though money



Wim Wenders: 'Faraway, So Close'

was the source of the disagreement. Dauman has reportedly been in discussions with French electronics giant, the Thomson Group, with a view to a buy-out.

One film that Oliver Stone was never scheduled to make is the much-discussed James Dean biopic, set to be produced by Marvin Worth ('Malcolm X') at Warner Bros. The film was originally to be directed by Michael Mann, but he backed out when he couldn't find the right star (he wanted Leonardo DiCaprio, but not until the lad is a couple of years older).

The film will now be made by theatre director Des McAnuff of the San Diego Playhouse, who co-wrote and directed Broadway hit 'The Who's Tommy'. The script will be by playwright Israel Horowitz, and McAnuff is apparently quite happy to use DiCaprio as is (though some sources suggest that the key role may go either to Johnny Depp – who played DiCaprio's elder brother in 'What's Eating Gilbert Grape' – or to Ethan Hawke).

Surprisingly, no one has so far suggested 'Beverly Hills' a virtual James Dean lookalike – for the role. Could it, Mr Busy wonders, be something to do with Perry's acting skills?

● The phrase 'young film-makers' carries a certain mystique. Not so 'old film-makers', though there are obviously more of them around. Sadly, however, their track records are not so different from first-timers', at any rate when it concerns comebacks.

Mouche, the film which was to mark the return of 83-year-old Marcel Carné, remains stalled, despite repeated reports that shooting is about to begin. And some commentators are less than optimistic about anything coming of the recent announcement that Michelangelo Antonioni and Wim Wenders are to co-direct a film called *Meditations* (Wenders doesn't qualify for veteran status yet, but he could use a comeback).

Meditations is scheduled to be produced by Italian state distribution company and archive Istituto Luce with a cast that is to include Catherine Deneuve, Marcello Mastroianni and Willem Dafoe.

The motive behind the film, according to an official Istituto Luce statement, is that it will "revitalise the Italian movie business".

Plus ça change department: Paul Anderson, director of 'Shopping', one of whose aims was to make entertaining and commercial British films for the so-called multiplex generation, has followed the lead of almost every other ambitious British film-maker with a yen to make entertaining and commercial British films by crossing the Atlantic.

The director's second film will be for Hollywood mini-major New Line and will be a movie version of the highly successful computer game 'Mortal Kombat', which, like 'Shopping', received a certain amount of stick for its celebration of violence.

● Virtually unmentioned in the UK obituary columns was the death on 4 June of Italian actor Massimo Troisi at the age of 41 following a heart attack. Troisi won the Coppa Volpi (Best Actor) award at Venice in 1989 for *Che ora è* and was probably best known outside Italy for his roles in two other Ettore Scola films: *Splendor* (1988) and *Il viaggio di Capitan Fracassa* (1990).

The day before his death, Troisi had shot the final scene in Michael Radford's *Il postino*, about the friendship between Chilean poet Pablo Neruda and the postman who delivered his letters. Philippe Noiret played Neruda and Troisi the postman.

Quote of the month comes from Bruce Brown, who made a fortune in 1966 by four-wallling (distributing himself) the classic surfing movie 'The Endless Summer'. Recently Brown has been at work around the world on 'The Endless Summer II', which took him two-and-a-half years to complete.

"Film-making is hard for me," Brown told *Variety's* Max Alexander. "I don't just whip one out. But I guess it's hard for everybody. That's why there are so many crappy films."

● Remember Emily Lloyd, who walked away with *Wish You Were Here*? For a while after that, Lloyd was a hot property in Hollywood, though a lot of the heat was dissipated by a turkey called *In Country*, in which she starred opposite Bruce Willis.



Who is 'Tank Girl'?

Her US career suffered a further setback recently when she was dropped, just before production was due to start, from the lead role in *Tank Girl*, the latest film from Trilogy, the company that brought you *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, *Backdraft* and the soon-to-be-released *Blown Away*. *Tank Girl*, the latest example of the mid-90s' favourite genre, the cyberpunk movie, is based (as usual) on a comic book and features such other characters as Jet Girl and the Rippers, who are half men, half kangaroos.

Lloyd's role was taken by Lori Petty – who, ironically enough, was herself replaced at the start of *Demolition Man* by Sandra Bullock.

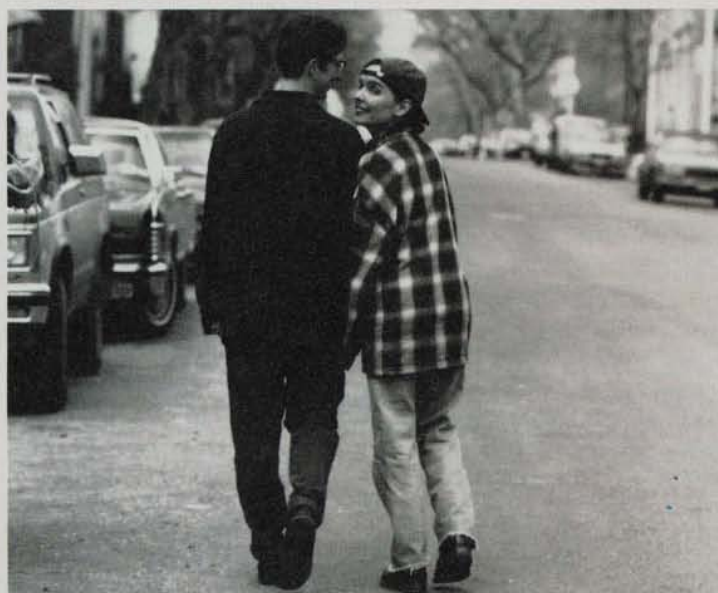
SAN FRANCISCO NOTES

World and time enough

The San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival held its eighteenth edition this June. It's the oldest and largest of the 75 or more lesbian/gay film festivals now operating around the world and, being in San Francisco, it's different from all the others. 'The gay Cannes' is the operative sobriquet, and it's only slightly self-mocking. After all, more than 55,000 people attended the festival during ten days of flawlessly gorgeous weather, queuing in long lines for the chance to sit in the dark and see programmes they'd probably never heard of before the festival's promotional apparatus got to work.

It's a cinematic three-ring circus, with more than 300 films and tapes packed into over 120 different shows unspooling in the funky/intimate Roxie, the grandiose Castro and the brand-new Yerba Buena Center theatres. Frameline distinguishes itself in quantity and quality, merging the programming strength of world-class curators Mark Finch and Jenni Olson with organisational clout, Olson's archival knowledge, Finch's precision management, an almost all-volunteer staff's grace under pressure, and the secret ingredient that only San Francisco can provide: the audience. This is a unique audience, full of enthusiasm, generous, eager to embrace work that speaks to its concerns, dedicated to the festival. Gregg Bordowitz, in town with his *Fast Trip*, *Long Drop*, was received like a conquering hero.

The queues outside the theatres deserve their own reviews. When *Go Fish* sold out the 1,500-seat Castro on opening night, the line-up of lesbians displayed more fashion statements than the film had words for. Hip-hop barbies posed alongside the crunchiest of granola dykes, with



Dedicated followers of fashion: 'Go Fish', sold out, on opening night

enough drama in the dialogue to fuel a dozen new screenplays. On boys' night out, gym-studs, cyber-geeks and hip-hop boys – guys who don't go to the same club – came out for *World and Time Enough* and found themselves in the same line (agreeably so, since the film won an Audience Award). For the most high-concept Finch and Olson compilation, 'Anatomy 101' (which had 'Female-to-Male' and 'Male-to-Female' shows), the lines were easily the equivalent of the videos, just as witty and transgressive.

In film terms, the surprise discovery of the festival was *Only the Brave*, a Greek-Australian featurette by first-timer Ana Kokkinos. Astonishingly confident in style and subject, her film traces a triangle of attraction in a working-class district of Melbourne. Its teenage protagonist vacillates between the best friend she loves and wants to save and the erotically

charged teacher who wants to save her. Visually intense and emotionally moving, *Only the Brave* is a flat-out success in the highest art-film tradition and Kokkinos deserved the star-is-born reception she got (and the Audience Award she won). It's a career-making debut, and we're bound to see more from the ex-lawyer and new film-school graduate.

In its early years, this festival was a small-scale corrective to what got left out elsewhere. Then it became celebratory, helping to fuel the rise of a subcultural sphere. Now, in the 90s, something more is at stake: Frameline has a world-class event on its hands, a festival that has grown with its community and has begun to outpace its mainstream festival rivals. Lesbian and gay film and video festivals are different, though, in some fundamental ways from the usual circuit. First, film

and video are accorded equal pride of place, and audiences don't favour one over the other. Second, shorts are treated with as much respect and programming savvy as features.

Finally, in San Francisco, programmers and critics are treated with as much attention and enthusiasm as film-makers. This year, Richard Dyer and James Mackay presented a score of audience-pleasing tributes that put work in context and provided a history. Sande Zeig commissioned short works from Rose Troche, Shu-Lea Cheang and others for a 'New York Giants' show. And the San Francisco chapter of GLAAD put together an evening at the Roxie called 'Seen Anything Good Lately?' that sold out the house with clips (plus analysis) culled from a year of television viewing.

As the 'New Queer Cinema' continues to grow in force and variety, the Frameline Festival has acquired a significance that is far more than the sum of its parts. And it is struggling to meet its destiny. Mark Finch announced that next year Frameline will inaugurate a Lesbian and Gay Media Market. Jenni Olson will become director of a Frameline Archive and Resource Programme and publish a massive guide to lesbian and gay film and video. There's a synergy of quality and quantity in programmes and audiences, combined with boundless local enthusiasm and energy. Add to this a list of corporate sponsors that would make any fundraiser envious, and this conjunction of aesthetics and political momentum makes the San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival a one-of-a-kind experience, sustaining community as well as it jumpstarts careers.

B. Ruby Rich





THE SPHINX WITHOUT A RIDDLE

Irony twists on familiar tales mark the Coen Brothers' films, from 'Blood Simple' to 'The Hudsucker Proxy'. But what exactly is their achievement? By John Harkness

An everyday Coen Brothers' nightmare: Tim Robbins as Norville Barnes in 'The Hudsucker Proxy', left; Paul Newman as the evil Sidney Mussberger, right



There's a fine line between homage and rip-off. The Coen Brothers' originality lies not in their stories, which are derived from any number of better-known sources, but in the sheer aplomb they bring to the film-making process, the relentless darkness of their humour and the ironic twists they give to familiar tales.

Blood Simple and *Miller's Crossing* are film noir plain but not simple, the latter owing so much to *The Glass Key* that it's a wonder the Hammett estate didn't sue for plagiarism. *Raising Arizona* functions simultaneously as a commentary on the baby-centric comedies of the mid-80s and a live-action realisation of a Road Runner cartoon. *Barton Fink* belongs both in the writers' nightmare school of Hollywood stories and as a concurrent remake of *The Tenant* and *Repulsion* – its Palme D'Or at Cannes came the year Polanski was president of the jury, though when I interviewed jury member Alan Parker shortly thereafter, he assured me that the decision had been unanimous.

The Coens' latest, *The Hudsucker Proxy*, predates *Blood Simple* as a project. Written by the Coens and their mentor Sam Raimi (*The Evil Dead*, *Darkman*), eventually someone managed to get hack genius Joel Silver, producer of *Lethal Weapons* and *Predators*, to put up \$40 million to finance the production of this monstrous confluence of Frank Capra and Preston Sturges. This is the funniest thing about *The Hudsucker Proxy*.

Waring Hudsucker (Charles Durning) listens to his comptroller's financial report and then launches himself from the window of the 44th floor of the Hudsucker Building at the ►

◀ moment when Norville Barnes (Tim Robbins) arrives to begin his career in the mailroom. A graduate of the Muncie School of Business, Barnes has dreams of making it to the top of Hudsucker Industries, a plan that will be unwittingly assisted by the machinations of the evil Sidney J. Mussberger (Paul Newman). Barnes becomes the figurehead president of the company, and begins work on his invention, which he carries drawn on a carefully maintained, well-worn piece of paper in his shoe. The film charts Barnes' rise, fall and recovery, through the travails of bad press (Jennifer Jason Leigh as a tough-talking reporter with a heart of gold), accusations of fraud, and divine intervention.

Romantic wiseguys

From his infelicitous name to his physical clumsiness, Norville Barnes is a Preston Sturges hero trapped in a Frank Capra story, and never should that twain meet, especially not in a world that seems to have been created by Fritz Lang – the mechanistic monstrousness of the mailroom contrasted with the Bauhaus gigantism of the corporate offices perfectly matches the boss-labour split in *Metropolis*.

The difference between Capra and Sturges is that Capra has an authentic belief in the romanticism of pure individualism. His characters are genuinely heroic battlers against the grinding power of big money and big politics. It's a faith blind to its own darkest implications that untrammelled individualism is as much a piece of the capitalist monsters as it is of the heroes, the dividing line being that the capitalists' individualism is wholly self-interested.

Sturges, on the other hand, is a romantic wiseguy. He believes in love, but only in its more bizarre and tortured forms, as in Henry Fonda's obsession with Barbara Stanwyck's card-sharp in *The Lady Eve*, or Eddie Bracken's masochistic pursuit of Betty Hutton in *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek*. Sturges is too in love with the baroque possibilities of the English language to honour the simple decency of a Jimmy Stewart in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. The world created in his films is benign and harmless. His heroes do battle with their own limitations, rather than with the malevolent forces of darkness that range themselves against Capra's heroes. A Sturges hero would be eaten alive in Capra's world, which is why *Hudsucker*'s premise doesn't work. There isn't enough weird luck in the universe to save Norville Barnes from Sidney Mussberger, so the film's ending turns out to be more improbable than anything in either Sturges or Capra.

The Coens are quite different. People think their notorious press conferences and interviews, which consist of misdirected remarks and gnomish mumbles, are a put on, but really they work to hide the fact that the brothers don't believe in much of anything – they have enormous abilities, but are sphinxes without riddles. One suspects that Ethan's comment at the Cannes press conference for *Barton Fink* that their films are just frameworks on which they can hang cheap jokes was not a joke at all. There is an emptiness at the heart of their work which can be ignored when the films are entertaining, but which shows up dreadfully when they aren't.

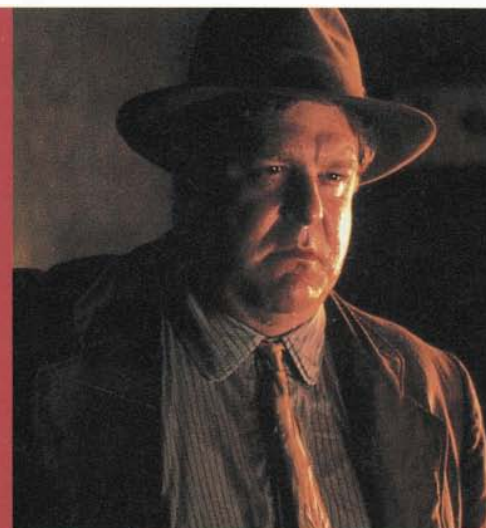
One can easily see what the Coens are at-



Comedy and its discontents: the Coens try to marry the traditions of Capra ('*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*', top) and Sturges ('*Sullivan's Travels*', above). Glimpses of the Coens' own world: Jennifer Jason Leigh in '*The Hudsucker Proxy*', centre; John Goodman in '*Barton Fink*', top right; Gabriel Byrne in '*Miller's Crossing*', bottom right

tempting here, with their extreme stylisation and willingness to reduce actors to single bit-players' mannerisms, but this misses the point. Directors in the 30s and 40s used the stylised performances of the great bit players as a characterological shorthand, the way Renaissance dramatists could refer to the *commedia dell'arte* and everyone would know what they meant. But the leading players were not reduced to a single trick, the way the Coens shrivel Jennifer Jason Leigh into a caricature of Katherine Hepburn's drawl and one imperious gesture. (I think Jennifer Jason Leigh may be the most talented actress in American movies today, but all I could think while watching *The Hudsucker Proxy* was that she didn't enunciate well enough to be a plausible visitor from Planet Kate, and that, to echo Addison DeWitt, she simply wasn't tall enough to make the finger to the sky salute the Coens kept asking of her.)

The Coens' fondness for extreme stylisation often works. In *Blood Simple* and *Miller's Crossing*, their reduction of characters to trademark gestures and phrases is well suited to the hermetically sealed universe of film noir. *Raising Arizona*'s characters inhabit the same malevolently indifferent world as Wile E. Coyote, whom Nicolas Cage could play without resorting to a costume. The delirious self-absorption of the characters in *Barton Fink* emerges in their unique and completely differentiated mass of tics – it is entirely appropriate that the two least stylised players in the film would turn out to be John Goodman's serial killer and his victim, Judy Davis. *Barton Fink* can easily be seen as an opera



BFI STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS (2) / RONALD GRANT (2)

in which everyone gets an aria, but they are all loath to sing duets.

In *The Hudsucker Proxy*, the Coens attempt to jam together two items that simply don't mix – a 30s story and characters, and a 50s setting. The styles of American film acting changed so much between the age of Gary Cooper and the age of James Dean and Marlon Brando that it's hard to realise that they were separated by only a couple of decades. The styles of urban everyman had changed, the style of supporting acting had changed, the style of dialogue had changed. The exterior assurance of the 30s stars gave way to the tortured interior anguish of the 50s Method mumbler. The first influx of New York writers, the Hechts and Perlman and Parkers, all urban smarts, had given way to the seriousness of Inge and Williams, all anguish. The casual patter of comedies in the late 50s is a drone, not the rat-a-tat of the old newspaper comedies. In addition, 30s cinema has an intimacy that often disappears by the time the studios start filming on outdoor locations and trying to fill the Cinema-Scope frame. One can see why the Coens wanted a 30s-style patter and a 50s setting, for Barnes' invention is inextricably associated with the latter period, but big empty sets are not conducive to snappy dialogue, which is why there are so few laughs in *Lawrence of Arabia*.

Furthermore, the stylised acting of the 30s and 40s comedies takes place around the realistic romantic leads. It humanises the beauty of the young Gary Cooper if his best friend is a baleful cynic like Walter Brennan. Even in Sturges' films, there is often a conventional leading man

who exists as a still centre around whom and to whom things happen – Joel McCrea in *Sullivan's Travels*, Henry Fonda in *The Lady Eve*. Even in *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek*, the epic degradation of Eddie Bracken's character makes us sympathetic towards him – we never perceive him, as we do Norville Barnes, as some kind of geek savant.

Cold-hearted bastards

Part of this comes from Tim Robbins' performance, though I don't think we can blame Robbins himself – the best performances in the Coens' films often seem to be ones that get away from the brothers' rigid conception (Goodman in *Barton Fink*, for example), and Robbins' broad mugging was probably asked for. We cannot blame an actor if his casting is a mistake from the outset. The hero is supposed to be a loveable little guy, and casting Tim Robbins as loveable or little is like casting Rip Torn as Gandhi. He towers over everyone else, and whatever Robbins' fine qualities as an actor, being loveable isn't one of them. Had he played this role earlier in his career, about the time when he was doing *Erik The Viking* and *Bull Durham*, he might have got away with it, but while Altman may have given him his two best roles – in *The Player* and *Short Cuts* – he also revealed that Robbins' great talent is an ability to inhabit the reptilian skins of men best described as cold-hearted bastards.

Capra was not an innocent film-maker, but he was a naive one, and there is no evidence that he ever doubted the peculiar American dream his films portrayed, or that he was anything but indifferent to the dark implications of his work:

the way the 'little people' are subject to manipulation at the hands of capitalist media and prone to lapse into mob violence and hysteria at the drop of a hat; the way his shining heroes are self-absorbed individualists as immune to compromise as any of the heroes of writer Ayn Rand – exemplified by the arch-individualist architect in *The Fountainhead*. It seems only too appropriate that Gary Cooper, who played Capra's small-time heroes Mr Deeds and John Doe, would later star as the overweening monumentalist in King Vidor's film adaptation of Rand's novel.

We live in an age so conscious of media manipulation and cinematic effects that it is difficult to make a film today that is not determinedly ironic about its own devices. Neo-Capra films such as Stephen Frears' *Accidental Hero* and Ivan Reitman's *Dave* cannot convince us of the reality of their worlds because the film-makers have lost that power of belief. Why else would *Accidental Hero* try so hard yet so futilely to evoke the Capra of the 30s – its huge dissolve montages come straight out of *Meet John Doe*. The Capra films still function because of their extraordinary conviction and potent performances.

Capra's great films – *Meet John Doe* and *It's a Wonderful Life* – work because their dreams cannot contain their nightmares. The Coens' strengths lie in a stylisation that reduces or even eliminates the human presence from the frame, and a gallows humour they never shy away from. Their happy endings are ironic commentaries on the genres they subvert, and their world is composed only of nightmares.

'The Hudsucker Proxy' opens on 2 September

By bell hooks

SORROWFUL BLACK DEATH IS NOT A HOT TICKET

In most Hollywood films, black death is violent. Does 'Crooklyn', Spike Lee's provocative new film, challenge this habit, with its black female child star and the death of a mother at its heart?



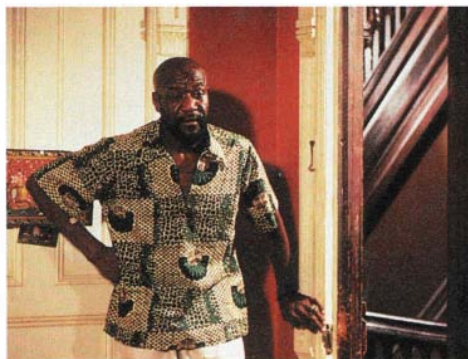
● Hollywood is not into plain old sorrowful death. The death that captures the public imagination in movies, the death that sells, is passionate, sexualised, glamorised and violent. Films like *One False Move*, *True Romance*, *Reservoir Dogs*, *Menace II Society*, *A Perfect World* bring us the sensational heat of relentless dying. It's fierce – intense – and there is no time to mourn. Dying that makes audiences contemplative, sad, mindful of the transitory nature of human life has little appeal. When portrayed in the contemporary Hollywood film, such deaths are swift, romanticised by soft lighting and elegiac soundtracks. The sights and sounds of death do not linger long enough to disturb “he senses, to remind us in any way that sorrow for the dying may be sustained and unrelenting. When Hollywood films depict sorrowful death, audiences come prepared to cry. Films like *Philadelphia* advertise the pathos so that even before tickets are brought and seats are taken, everyone knows that tears are in order, but that the crying time will not last long.

The racial politics of Hollywood is such that there can be no serious representations of death and dying when the characters are African-Americans. Sorrowful black death is not a hot ticket. In the financially successful film *The Bodyguard*, the sister of Rachel Marron (Whitney Houston) is accidentally assassinated by the killer she has hired. There is no grief, no remembrance. In most Hollywood movies, black death is violent. It is often trivialised and mocked – as in that viciously homophobic moment in *Menace II Society* when a young black male crack addict holding a fast-food hamburger while seeking drugs tells the powerful drug dealer, “I’ll suck your dick”, only to be blown away for daring to suggest that the hard gangsta mack would be at all interested. Pleased with the killing, he laughingly offers the hamburger to onlookers, a gesture that defines the value of black life. It’s worth nothing. It’s dead meat.

Even black children cannot be spared Hollywood’s cruelty. Audiences watching the film *Paris Trout* witness the prolonged, brutal slaughter of a gifted southern black girl by a powerful, sadistic, racist white man. The black males who are her relatives are depicted as utterly indifferent. Too cowardly to save or avenge her life, for a few coins they willingly show the lawyer who will defend her killer the blood stains left by her dragging body, the bullet holes in the walls. Her life is worth nothing.

Violent slaughter

Audiences are so accustomed to representations of the brutal death of black folks in Hollywood films that no one is outraged when our bodies are violently slaughtered. I could find no Hollywood movie where a white child is the object of a prolonged, brutal murder by a powerful white male – no image comparable to that of *Paris Trout*. Yet no group in the United States publicly protests against this image – even though the film is shown regularly on Home Box Office, reaching an audience far wider than the moviegoing public, finding its way into the intimate spaces of home life and the private world of family values. Apparently the



Daring to be different: Carolyn, opposite; Woody, above

graphic representation of the murder of a little black girl does not shock, does not engender grief or protest. There is collective cultural agreement that black death is inevitable, meaningless, not worth much. That there is nothing to mourn.

This is the culture Spike Lee confronts with his new film *Crooklyn*. On the surface, the movie appears to represent issues of death and dying in black life as though our survival matters, as though our living bodies count, yet in the end the usual Hollywood message about black death is reaffirmed. Lee has made a film that is both provocative and controversial. To introduce it to consumers who do not take black life seriously, advertisements give little indication of its content. Huge billboards tell consumers “The Smart Choice is Spike Lee’s hilarious *Crooklyn*”, suggesting that the film is a comedy. The seriousness of the subject matter must be downplayed, denied.

Expecting to see a comedy, moviegoers I talked to were not so much disappointed as puzzled by the fact that the comedic elements were overshadowed by the serious representation of a family in crisis that culminates with the mother’s death. When the movie ended, the folks standing around the theatre in Greenwich Village were mostly saying: “It wasn’t what I expected. It wasn’t like his other films.” But *Crooklyn* differs from Lee’s previous work primarily because the major protagonist is a ten-year-old-girl, Troy (Zelda Harris). Positively radical in this regard – rarely do we see Hollywood films with black female stars, not to mention child stars – *Crooklyn* invites audiences to look at black experience through Troy’s eyes, to enter the spaces of her emotional universe, the intimate world of family and friends that grounds her being and gives her life meaning.

Lee’s magic as a film-maker has been best expressed by his construction of an aesthetic space wherein decolonised images (familiar representations of blackness that oppose racist stereotypes) are lovingly presented. But this radical intervention is most often framed by a conventional narrative and structure of representations that reinscribes stereotypical norms. The laughing darky family portrait that advertises *Crooklyn* is just one example. Moviegoers want to see this image rather than those that challenge it. This contradictory stance tends to undermine Lee’s ability to subvert dominant representations of blackness. His radical images are usually overshadowed by stock characterisations and can be easily overlooked, particularly by audiences who are more

accustomed to stereotypes. Even progressive, aware viewers may be so fascinated by the funky, funny ‘otherness’ of typical Spike Lee black images that they refuse to ‘see’ representations that challenge conventional ways of looking at blackness.

J. Hoberman’s review of *Crooklyn* in *Village Voice* is a perfect example of the way our standpoint can determine how we see what we see. Hoberman did not see a film that highlights issues of death and dying – to his mind’s eye, “the grittier specifics of the Lee family drama” are exemplified by arguments at family dinners and witty disagreements over television programmes. Indeed, he saw the movie as having “no particular plot”; never mentioning the mother’s death, he did not see the film as constructing a context in which this event, more than any other, leads to a ten-year-old black girl’s coming of age. Hoberman is more engaged with the comedic aspects of the film, especially those that centre on the eldest child in this family of four boys and one girl, Clinton (Carlton Williams), the character who most resembles Lee himself. Not unlike other moviegoers I talked to, Hoberman seems more fascinated with the antics of Spike Lee, controversial film-maker, than with the content of his film. By deflecting attention away from *Crooklyn* and on to Lee, Hoberman and others do not have to interrogate the film on its own terms. To do that would require looking at *Crooklyn*’s treatment of death and dying, and the way this aspect of the film fails to excite and challenge our imagination.

Play and pleasure

Crooklyn is most compelling in those moments when it offers fictive representations of black subjectivity rarely seen in mainstream cinema, depictions that counter both racist stereotypes and facile notions of positive images. The property-owning, artistic, progressive 70s black family portrayed is one that dares to be different. The Carmichaels in no way represent the conventional black bourgeoisie: they are not obsessed with being upwardly mobile, with the material trappings of success. Counter-cultural – a mixture of the nationalist movement for racial uplift and a bohemian artistic subculture – they represent an alternative to the bourgeois norm.

The father Woody (Delroy Lindo) is an aspiring jazz musician and composer, the mother Carolyn (Alfre Woodard) a non-traditional schoolteacher. Their five children are all encouraged by progressive, hands-off parenting to be individuals with their own interests, passions and obsessions. These are not your average kids: they take a democratic vote to see which television show will be watched and are made to participate equally in household chores. Though black nationalist thinking shapes the family politics, the world they live in is multicultural and multi-ethnic – Italians, Latinos, gays and straights, young and old, the haves and have nots are all part of the mix. This is the world of cultural hybridity and border crossing extolled by progressive contemporary critics. And much of the film depicts that world ‘as is’, not framed by the will to ►

◀ present images that are artificially positive or unduly negative.

Beginning in the style of a fictive documentary (enhanced initially by the cinematography of Arthur Jafa), the film's opening scene offers a panorama of visual images of black community that disrupts prevailing one-dimensional portrayals of urban black life. Highlighting scenes of play and pleasure, the beauty of black bodies, the faces of children and old men, we see joy in living as opposed to the usual depictions of racial dehumanisation and deprivation. These representations signal heightened creativity, an unbridled imagination that creates splendour in a world of lack, that makes elegance and grace so common a part of the everyday as to render them regular expressions of natural communion with the universe.

Northerners in drag

This opening sequence acts like a phototext, calling us to be resisting readers able to embrace a vision of blackness that challenges the norm. Lee engages a politics of representation which cultural critic Saidiya Hartman describes in 'Roots and Romance', an essay on black photography, as "a critical labor of reconstruction". She explains: "It is a resolutely counterhegemonic labor that has as its aim the establishment of other standards of aesthetic value and visual possibility. The intention of the work is corrective representation." At rare moments through the film this strategy is realised. And it is marvellous to follow where the camera leads – to catch sight of such empowering images. Seduced by this initial moment of radical intervention – by the way it shifts paradigms and requires new ways of seeing – the enthralled viewer can sit in a daze of delight through the rest of the movie, failing to experience how the cinematic direction and narrative structure counteract the initial subversive representations.

A distinction must be made between oppositional representations and romantically glorifying images of blackness which white supremacist thinking as it informs movie-making may have rendered invisible. Visibility does not mean that images are inherently radical or progressive. Hartman urges cultural critics to interrogate this distinction, to ask necessary questions: "Simply put, how are redemptive narratives of blackness shaped and informed by romantic racialism, the pastoral and sentimental representation of black life? How is the discourse of black cultural authenticity and Afrocentrism shaped and informed by this construction of Africanism and do they too maintain and normalise white cultural hegemony?" *Crooklyn* is offered as a redemptive narrative. The counterhegemonic images we see at the beginning serve to mask all that is 'wrong' with this picture.

From the moment we encounter the Carmichaels at their dinner table, we are offered a non-critical representation of their family life. Shot like docu-drama, these early scenes appear innocent and neutral; the ethnographic day-in-a-life style of presentation demands that the viewer see nothing wrong with this picture. The camera aggressively nor-



malises. These family scenes are presented unproblematically and so appear to be positive representations, fulfilling Lee's quest to bring to the big screen 'authentic' black aesthetic subjects.

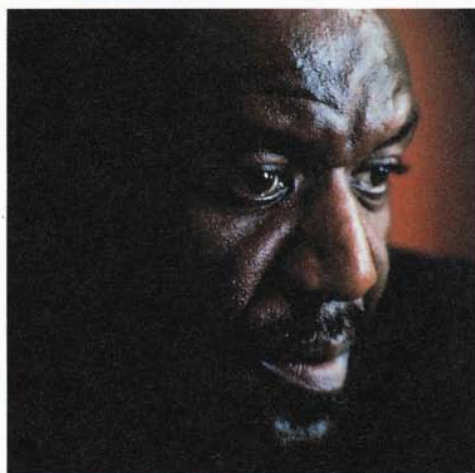
Since Spike Lee's cinematic genius is best revealed during those moments when he documents familiar aspects of a rich black cultural legacy wherein collective internal codes and references that may or may not be known to outsiders converge, it is easy to overlook the fact that these counterhegemonic representations are constantly countered in his work by stock stereotypical images. When these are coupled with Lee's use of 'animal house' type humour appropriated from mainstream white culture, a carnivalesque atmosphere emerges that seems directed towards mainstream, largely white, viewers. This cultural borrowing, which gives the movie cross-over appeal, is most evident in the scenes where Troy travels south to stay with relatives in a Virginia suburb. Though the cinematography didactically demands that the audience detach from a notion of the 'real' and engage the 'ridiculous and absurd', these scenes appear stupid, especially the mysterious, not really comical, death of the pet dog Troy's aunt dotes on. Lee works overtime to create a comedic atmosphere to contrast with the seriousness of the Carmichael household, but it does not work; the switch to an anamorphic lens confuses (no doubt that is why signs were placed at ticket booths telling viewers that this change did not indicate a problem with the projector). In these scenes Lee mockingly caricatures the southern

black middle class (who appear more like northerners in drag doing the classic Hollywood comedic rendition of southern life). Lee gives it to us in black face. It is predictable and you can't wait to return home to the Carmichael family. However, while he strategically constructs images to normalise the dysfunctions of the Carmichael family, he insists on making this family pathological. This attempt at counterhegemonic representation fails.

Anyone who sees the Carmichael family without the rose-coloured glasses the film offers will realise that they are seriously dysfunctional. The recurrent eating disorders (one of the children is coercively forced by verbal harassment to eat to the point where on one occasion he vomits in his plate); an excessive addiction to sugar (dad's pouring half a bag of the white stuff into a pitcher of lemonade, his cake and ice-cream forays, his candy-buying all hint that he may be addicted to more than sugar, though he is not overtly shown to be a drug-user); the lack of economic stability, signified by the absence of money for food choice, shutting off the electricity, as well as dad's mismanagement of funds, are all indications that there are serious problems. By normalising the family image, Lee refuses to engage with the issue of psychological abuse; all interactions are made to appear natural, ordinary, comedic, not tragic. The autobiographical roots of *Crooklyn* may account for Lee's inability to take any stance other than that of 'objective' reporter; working with a screenplay written collaboratively with his sister Joie and brother Cinqué, he may have felt the need to



Flirtatious and cute, Troy manipulates with practised charm. It is she who advises her dad to take Carolyn on a date to make up



Pleasures and pains: Zelda Harris as Troy, the little princess, top; Delroy Lindo as her mild-mannered father Woody, above

distance himself from the material. Certainly emotional detachment characterises the interaction between family members in the film.

Joie Lee stated that to write the screenplay she “drew from the few memories I have of my mother”, who died of cancer when she was 14. Yet the children in *Crooklyn* are much younger than this and are clearly deeply ambivalent about their mother. Portrayed as a modern-day Sapphire with direct lineage to the *Amos n’ Andy* character, Carolyn responds to economic crisis by constantly nagging and erupting into irrational states of anger and outrage that lead her to be mean and at times abusive. Even though the problems the family faces are caused by Woody’s unemployment, he is depicted compassionately – an aspiring artist who just wants

to be left alone to compose music, always laid-back and calm.

Sexist/racist stereotypes of gender identity in black experience are evident in the construction of these two characters. Although Carolyn is glamorous, beautiful in her Afrocentric style, she is portrayed as a bitch goddess. Her physical allure seduces, even as her unpredictable rage alienates. In keeping with sexist stereotypes of the emasculating black matriarch, Carolyn usurps her husband’s authority by insisting that as the primary breadwinner she has the right to dominate, shaming Woody in front of the children. These aspects encourage us to see her unsympathetically and to empathise with him. His irresponsibility and misuse of resources is given legitimacy by the suggestion that his is an artistic, non-patriarchal mindset; he cannot be held accountable. Since Carolyn’s rage is often over-reactive, it is easy to forget that she has concrete reasons to be angry. Portrayed as vengeful, anti-pleasure, dangerous and threatening, her moments of tenderness are not sustained enough to counter the negatives. Even her sweetness is depicted as manipulative, whereas Woody’s ‘sweet’ demeanour is a mark of his artistic sensibility, one that enhances his value.

As the artist, he embodies the pleasure principle, the will to transgress. His mild-mannered response to life is infinitely more compelling than the work-hard-to-meet-your-responsibilities ethic by which Carolyn lives. Being responsible seems to make her ‘crazy’. In one scene the children are watching a basketball game when she encourages them to turn off the television to do schoolwork. They refuse to obey and she goes berserk. Woody intervenes, not to offer reinforcement, but rather to take sides. Carolyn becomes the bad guy, who wants to curtail the children’s freedom to indulge in pleasure without responsibility. Woody responds to her rage by being physically coercive. Domestic violence in black life is sugarcoated – portrayed as a family affair, one where there are no victims or abusers. In fact, Carolyn has been humiliated and physically assaulted. But her demand that Woody leave makes him appear the victim and the children first attend to him, pleading with him not to go. Her pain is unattended by her male children; it is Troy who assumes the traditional feminine role of caretaker.

In contrast to Carolyn, the ten-year-old Troy is concerned with traditional notions of womanhood. Her mother expresses rage at not being able to “take a piss without six people hanging off my tits”, repudiating sexist thinking about the woman’s role. Flirtatious and cute, Troy manipulates with practised charm. It is she who advises her dad to take Carolyn on a date to make up. Troy embodies all the desirable elements of sexist-defined femininity. Indeed, it is her capacity to escape into a world of romantic fantasy that makes her and everyone else ignore her internal anguish. When she lies, steals and cheats, her acts of defiance have no consequences. As the little princess, she has privileges denied her brothers; when her mother is sick, it is only Troy who is sheltered from this painful reality and sent down south.

In the home of her southern relatives, Troy

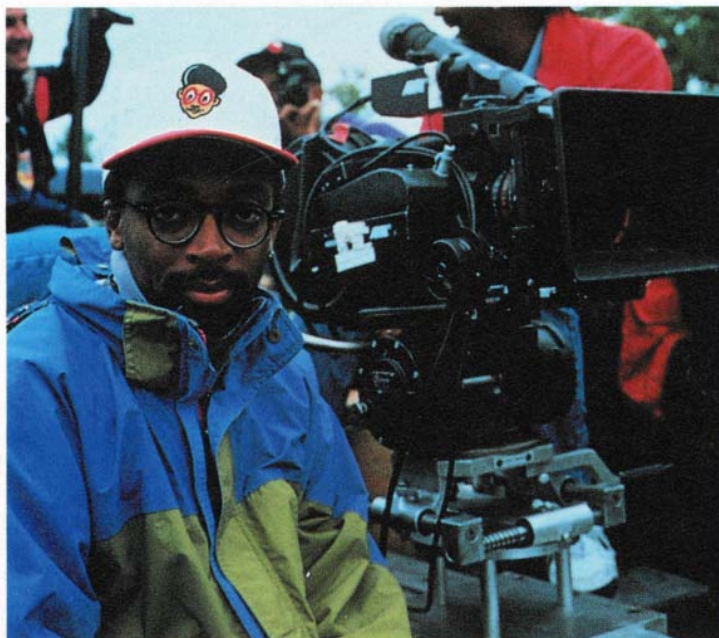
meets a fair-skinned cousin who is portrayed as conventionally feminine in her concerns, though she is eager to bond with her guest. By contrast Troy assumes a ‘bitchified role’. She is hostile, suspicious, until charmed. Representing the light-skinned female as ‘good’ and Troy as ‘bad’, *Crooklyn*, like all Lee’s films, perpetuates stereotypes of darker-skinned females as evil. While her cousin is loving, Troy is narcissistic and indifferent. When she decides to return home, it is her cousin who runs alongside the car that carries Troy away, waving tenderly, while Troy appears unconcerned. This encounter prepares us for her transformation from princess to mini-matriarch.

Taken to the hospital to see her mother, Troy is given instructions as to how she must assume the caretaker role. Contemporary feminist thinkers are calling attention to girlhood as a time when females have access to greater power than that offered us in womanhood. No one in the film is concerned about the loss of Troy’s girlhood, though her brothers remain free to maintain their spirit of play. Clinton, the eldest boy, does not have to relinquish his passion for sports to become responsible; he can still be a child. But becoming a mini-matriarch because her mother is sick and dying requires of Troy that she relinquish all concern with pleasure and play, that she repress desire. Sexist/racist thinking about black female identity leads to cultural acceptance of the exploitation and denigration of black girlhood. Commenting on the way black girls are often forced to assume adult roles in *In the Company of My Sisters: Black Women and Self-Esteem*, Julia Boyd asserts: “Without fully understanding the adult tasks we were expected to perform, we filled shoes that were much too big for our small feet. Again, we did not have a choice and we weren’t allowed to experience the full developmental process of girlhood.” Lee romanticises this violation by making it appear a ‘natural’ progression for Troy rather than sexist gender politics coercively imposing a patriarchal role via a process of socialisation.

Television times

Carolyn did not make gender distinctions about household chores when she was well, and the movie fails to indicate why she now has an unconvincing shift in attitude. As if to highlight patriarchal thinking that females are interchangeable, undifferentiated, the film in no way suggests that there is anything wrong with a ten-year-old girl assuming an adult role. Indeed, this is affirmed, and the mother’s dying is upstaged by the passing of the torch to Troy. The seriousness of her illness is announced to the children by their father, who commands them to turn away from their gleeful watching of *Soul Train* to hear the news (even in her absence, the mother/matriarch spoils their pleasure). Throughout *Crooklyn* Lee shows the importance of television in shaping the children’s identities, their sense of self. While the boys panic emotionally when they hear the news, bursting into tears, Troy’s feelings are hidden by a mask of indifference. That the children obey their father in their mother’s absence (not complaining when he tells ►

The film Lee has made does not confront death. In 'Crooklyn', death and dying are realities that males escape from



More than nostalgia: Spike Lee on set re-imagining the 70s

◀ them to turn off the television) suggests that he is better able to assume an authoritative parental role when she is no longer present. Woody's transformation into a responsible adult reinscribes the sexist/racist thinking that the presence of a 'strong' black female emasculates the male. Carolyn's death is treated in a matter-of-fact manner; we learn about it as the children casually discuss the funeral. We never see the family grieve. Troy, who is emotionally numb, only confronts the reality of this death when she is jolted from sleep by what she imagines is her mother's raging voice. Bonding with her father in the kitchen, her suppressed grief does not unleash tears; instead she vomits. This ritual cathartic cleansing is the rite of passage that signals her movement away from girlhood.

Taking her mother's place, Troy is no longer adventurous. She no longer roams the streets, discovering, but is bound to the house, to domestic life. While the male children and grown-up dad continue to lead autonomous lives, to express their creativity and will to explore, Troy is confined, her creativity stifled. Since she is always and only a mother substitute, her power is more symbolic than real. We see her tending to the needs of her brothers, being the 'little woman'. Gone is the vulnerable, emotionally open girl who expressed a range of feelings; in her place is a hard impenetrable mask. Just as no one mourns the mother's death, no one mourns the erasure of Troy's adolescence. In their book *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls*, Myra and David Sadker document the pervasiveness of a "curricular sexism" that turns girls into "spectators instead of players". Troy becomes a spectator, standing behind the gate looking out at life, a stern expression on her face.

Silent losses

Though dead, Carolyn reappears to reassure and affirm her daughter. This reappearance is yet another rejection of loss. The controlling, dominating mother remains present even when dead, visible only to her girl child, now

the guardian of patriarchy who gives approval to Troy's subjugation. Powerful black mothers, who work outside the home, the film suggests, 'fail' their families. Their punishment is death. When she is dying Carolyn gives lessons in sexism to her daughter in a way that runs counter to the values she has expressed throughout the film (she does, however, encourage her daughter to think about a work future, if only because it is her own career that ensured the family's economic survival).

The Sadkers conclude their introductory chapter, which exposes the way sexist socialisation robs girls of their potential, with a section called 'Silent Losses' that ends with the declaration: "If the cure for cancer is forming in the mind of one of our daughters, it is less likely to become a reality than if it is forming in the mind of one of our sons." Whereas *Crooklyn* attempts to counter racist assumptions about black identity, it upholds sexist and misogynist thinking about gender roles. Order is restored in the Carmichael house when the dominating mother-figure dies. The emergence of patriarchy is celebrated, marked by the subjugating of Troy, and all the household's problems 'magically' disappear. Life not only goes on without the matriarch, but is more harmonious.

Crooklyn constructs a redemptive fictive narrative for black life where the subjugation of the black female body is celebrated as a rite of passage which is restorative, which ensures family survival. Whether it is the grown woman's body erased by death or the little girl's body erased by violent interruption of her girlhood, the sexist politics embedded in this movie has often gone unnoticed by viewers whose attention is riveted by the exploits of the male characters. In failing to identify with the female characters or to bring any critical perspective to these representations, audiences tacitly condone the patriarchal devaluation and erasure of rebellious black female subjectivity the film depicts. Oppositional representations of blackness deflect attention away from the sexist politics that surfaces when race and gender converge. The naturalistic style of

Crooklyn gives the sense of life-as-is rather than life as fictive construction.

Lee is indeed fictively re-imagining the 70s in this film and not merely providing a nostalgic portrait of the way things were. In his ahistorical narrative there is no meaningful convergence of black liberation and feminist politics, whereas in reality black women active in nationalist black power groups were challenging sexism and insisting on a feminist agenda. In *Crooklyn* Lee's aggressively masculinist vision is diffused by excessive sentimentality and by the use of Troy as the central embodiment of his message. Writing about the dangers that arise when excessive emotionality is used as a cover-up for a different agenda, James Baldwin reminds us that: "Sentimentality is the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion. It is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel." Such emotional dishonesty emerges full force in *Crooklyn*. The focus on Troy's coming of age and her mother's death is a non-threatening cover for the more insidious anti-woman, anti-feminist vision of black family life that is the film's dominant theme.

It is used to mask the repressive patriarchal valorisation of black family life, in which the reinscription of sexist idealised femininity symbolically rescues the family from dissolution. Death and dying are merely a subtext in *Crooklyn*, a diversionary ploy that creates a passive emotional backdrop on to which Lee imposes a vision of the black family that is conservative and in no way opposed to the beliefs of white mainstream culture. The aspects of the film that are rooted in Lee's own life-story are the most interesting; it is when he exploits those memories to create a counter-worldview that will advance patriarchal thinking that the narrative loses its appeal.

Women's work

Testifying that writing this script was cathartic, that it enabled her to confront the past, Joie Lee declares: "The emotional things that happen to you as a child, they're timeless, they stay with you until you deal with them. I definitely cleaned up some areas in my life that I hadn't dealt with before - like death." But the film Spike Lee has made does not confront death. In *Crooklyn*, death and dying are realities males escape from. There is no redemptive healing of a gendered split between mind and body; instead, *Crooklyn* echoes the patriarchal vision celebrated in Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death*, where the hope is that "unrepressed man" "would be rid of the nightmares... haunting civilization" and that "freedom from those fantasies would also mean freedom from that disorder in the human body."

The messiness of death is women's work in *Crooklyn*. Expressing creativity, engaging pleasure and play is the way men escape from the reality of death and dying. In the space of imaginative fantasy, Lee can resurrect the dead female mothering body and create a world where there is never any need to confront the limitations of the flesh and therefore no place for loss. In such a world there is no need for grief, since death has no meaning.

'Crooklyn' will be released in the UK later this year

●**1895** Lumière cinématographe opens to the paying public, in the Salon Indien of the Grand Café, 14 boulevard des Capucines, Paris

●**1906** The use of rose perfume in a Pennsylvania cinema is the first recorded example of 'smellies'

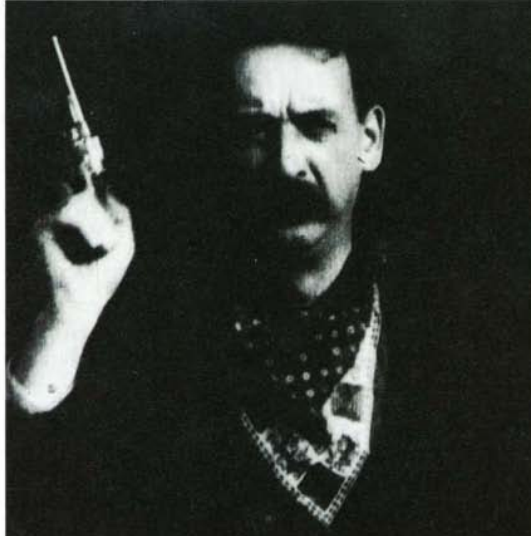
●**1912** Mihály Kertész directs in Hungary *Today and Tomorrow*; he goes on to make *Casablanca* in the USA in 1942 under the name Michael Curtiz

●**1925** Imperial Airways present first in-flight movie, *The Lost World*, on flight from London to continental Europe

●**1935** Mickey Mouse banned in Romania on grounds that he is frightening to children

●**1939** Hattie McDaniel is the first black actor to win

Sight and Sound



THE CHRONICLE OF CINEMA 1895 1995

●**1968** (February) Film-makers anticipate events of May 1968 when they protest at the removal of Henri Langlois as director of the Cinémathèque Française. Godard and Truffaut are among those injured

●**1976** *Rocky*: Sylvester Stallone becomes first performer since

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Charles Chaplin and Orson Welles to be nominated for an Academy Award as both actor and screenwriter for the same film

●**1985** India produces more than three times the number of films made in the US

●**1993** *Jurassic Park* achieves the biggest opening weekend gross ever, \$50.2 million



an Academy Award, as supporting actress in *Gone with the Wind*

●**1942** Kurosawa begins shooting his first film, *Sanshiro Sugata*

●**1951** *Cahiers du Cinéma* founded

●**1963** President Kennedy is assassinated; *The Manchurian Candidate* is withdrawn from circulation

Outside, Montmartre luxuriates in May sunshine. But in the Euro Studios, where Bertrand Tavernier and his editing crew are mixing the soundtrack of his latest film, *La Fille de d'Artagnan*, it's hot, dark and airless. On the screen a complex swashbuckle fight is played and replayed – men, swords and horses in deftly choreographed mayhem. If this extract is anything to go by, Tavernier's film retains all the sense of style and period so dismally lacking from Disney's recent brat-pack rendition of Dumas. Nothing youthful about his Musketeers, either: this is d'Artagnan and Co grown old and tubby, trapped in their own legends – like the ageing Robin Hood and his men in Dick Lester's *Robin and Marian*, a film Tavernier loves.

Lester's film comes up in our conversation, along with a host of other British movies, since Tavernier's encyclopaedic knowledge of cinema includes a familiarity with British films that would put many home-grown buffs to shame. It's a rare trait in France, where Truffaut's notorious put-down – "Isn't there a certain incompatibility between the terms

'cinema' and 'Britain'?" – still exercises its malign influence. "The trouble with Truffaut," Tavernier observes, "is that he couldn't praise anybody without denigrating a whole lot of other people. So if Rossellini was great, the rest of Italian cinema had to be rubbish. In England there was Hitchcock, therefore there could be nobody else. What's worse is that his disciples have gone on repeating this stuff without question for 25, 30 years. So most British films just don't get seen in France. Powell and Pressburger were unknown over here for years. Mackendrick, Hamer, Cavalcanti – you can hardly find their films on video, and outside *Positif* nobody in France wants to write about them."

It is Mackendrick, who died last December and whose films Tavernier greatly admires, that I've come to talk to him about. With mixing over for the day, we move to a nearby café to continue the conversation. But Tavernier's temperament is too ebullient, his mental cinemathèque too well stocked, to keep strictly to the set topic. We often return to Mackendrick, but we cover a fair stretch of other territory as well.

Sharp comedy and terrific performances mark Mackendrick's films. Bertrand Tavernier talks to Philip Kemp

TAVERNIER ON MACKENDRICK



Lethal laughs: Alec Guinness in 'The Ladykillers', above; Curtis and Lancaster in 'Sweet Smell of Success', opposite

● Bertrand Tavernier: Mackendrick made three films – no, four – that I admire enormously: *The Man in the White Suit*, which I've seen many times, *A High Wind in Jamaica*, of course, which is a masterpiece, and *Sweet Smell of Success*. It was that film that made me want to see all Mackendrick's earlier films. When I saw it, I thought, "Maybe there's something wrong with what Truffaut said. I want to check this." It wasn't at all appreciated by *Cahiers du cinéma*. There was a fine review by Robert Benayoun, I think in *Positif*, but *Cahiers* were – not bad, but inadequate. Part of the trouble was that a lot of French critics didn't speak English – not enough to understand the great dialogue.

Philip Kemp: Screenplays like *Odets* are almost impossible to translate. You lose all the flavour in subtitles – and with it, half the point of the film.

And it took me a long, long time to see *Mandy*.

Those four. His last film looked interesting, but I'd have to see it again.

'Don't Make Waves'? Sandy loathed it.

I remember two or three good scenes, but it wasn't satisfying. There's a common identity between his films – I found a link, which is like the link you find when you see all the Powell-Pressburger films from 1938 to 1952. And it's strange, because when Powell-Pressburger's films were made, critics were saying, "They're all so different, we can't find the theme." But seeing them together, first you realise that imagination is a theme in itself, then in all their films you find the same culture, the same intelligence at work, the same way of rooting the story into a certain cultural background that's both English and open to the rest of the world. Not insular at all.

Not like Michael Balcon, in other words? I know you've often accused him of being insular.

It's not that I'm against him – I think Balcon was very important in what he tried to do, to make British films and not imitations of American ones. But there were three things he lacked. He never understood the contribution of a director. For him, a director was a good technician, a good craftsman you bring in to film a script. Not someone who sometimes – not all the time – brings to the film a vision of his or her own.

The second thing was that Balcon was so much afraid of sex, of women. While the war was on he could concentrate on the war effort, on values – his intelligence was well used, he could be at his best. But when it came to going beyond that and creating something new, he was so shy of sex that it made his films tame and ridiculous. So while American cinema had

actresses like Gene Tierney, and all those films noirs with people like Barbara Stanwyck – you only have to compare those with British films of the time to see what was lacking. Britain just didn't make film noir.

Robert Hamer came very close to it.

Ah yes. Robert Hamer, Mackendrick, Cavalcanti – they were the three outcasts, the rebels and troublemakers of Ealing. And that's why I've always been interested in Mackendrick – you find in his films some of the qualities that Balcon didn't like very much. Because the third thing about Balcon was his petit-bourgeois state of mind, so when they tried to make satire it wasn't biting enough, not realistic enough. When Sandy was making *The Ladykillers*, Balcon took him aside and said, "I think I should tell you I've promised on your behalf that there's no satire in this one." I think *The Man in the White Suit* had scared the pants off him.

And it shows. The last years of Ealing were depressing considering some of the talents there, slowly turning out one dreary film after another – films which are absolutely insipid. And for a long time, for my generation who were discovering the cinema in the 50s, that was what British cinema was. Lewis Gilbert, *The Titfield Thunderbolt*, *Reach for the Sky*... The only Powell film we knew was *The Battle of the River Plate*, which has one or two good ideas, but on the whole it doesn't work. Then all of a sudden, out of the blue, made by a British director, came *Sweet Smell of Success*.

So you wanted to go back and see where he was coming from?

Exactly. And not long afterwards, *Peeping Tom*. I was responsible for re-releasing *Peeping Tom* in France and rediscovering Michael Powell's ►



◀ films and bringing him to Paris. We should have done the same for Mackendrick, and even, I now realise when I read what happened to him, for Robert Hamer.

Did you know that Balcon nearly put Robert Bresson under contract in 1946? 'Lancelot du Lac' was originally going to be made for Ealing. Maybe if that had happened, if a connection had been forged between English and French cinema at that point, it could have made all the difference. It would certainly have helped Hamer – you know what a Francophile he was.

Yes, that should have happened. Powell, of course, was also very Francophile, he used a lot of French technicians such as Georges Périnal. But the problem with Balcon – though I admire a lot of the things he tried, and it's why you have to watch for his shortcomings and not do the same thing – was that he wanted to be so British that he became British in a bad sense, insular. The British cinema had everything to gain from not cutting itself off from the rest of Europe. Instead, because of the unions, because of choices made by the producers, it became an island. So it was more difficult to do Anglo-French co-productions than to work with any other country.

Though there were one or two unexpected connections, like Georges Auric writing scores for Ealing films.

Not very good scores.

Maybe not – but to invite a member of Les Six to score 'Passport to Pimlico' at least suggests imagination and openness. And of course there was Cavalcanti, a cosmopolitan if ever there was one.

Cavalcanti brought a lot. And he made *Went the Day Well?* for Ealing, which is a masterpiece, and *Dead of Night*, where Hamer's episode is very striking. But I like in Mackendrick what I like in Powell and Pressburger, though in very different ways – the fact that they're British films, but they're open to the rest of the world. In Mackendrick there's also a lack of easy affirmation – they're films which doubt, which are sceptical. Not like Powell and Pressburger, who at their best had a sense of nature which was gothic, like Kipling, pantheistic. There are storms, lightning. Sandy in a way is more narrow, or rather – not narrow, look at *A High Wind in Jamaica* – it's that most of Sandy's films are not what they appear to be. There's always another film beneath the film the people thought they were making.

I think that's what worried Balcon. He always suspected there was this further layer to Sandy's films that he couldn't quite control.

Right – Balcon expected a comedy, and *The Man in the White Suit* is a political comment about England, quite brutal. And to Fox, *A High Wind in Jamaica* was simply a pirate film, like *Shane*... Where Sandy intended a subversive study of paedophilia, obsession and child psychology. You know they wanted to cast Terry Thomas as the Captain, and make him a curate in disguise?

Hah! Anthony Quinn liked the film, you know, and he liked Sandy. I don't know if they got on very well?

Sandy said he had problems with him. For me, Quinn gives a very interesting performance. A lot of people say he overacts...

On the contrary, he's rather subdued.

He is, and also he isn't playing a pirate, he's playing someone who's trying to be a pirate. He's a Mexican



Storms within: 'High Wind in Jamaica'

Mackendrick doesn't benefit from the image of being a victim of the system, like Orson Welles

peasant, born miles from the sea, so he wears the ridiculous hat and does the pirate guffaw – but always with this nervous, sidelong edge: "Am I doing it right?" That's a theme that's always there in Mackendrick's films – they're about people playing parts, playing with images. *Sweet Smell of Success* is a film about two people trying either to create or to protect their image. *The Ladykillers* is about a group who want so much to pass for musicians that – you remember, it's the best joke in the whole film – when Herbert Lom is left alone in the room he puts on the record so there's only one of them in the room and still the quintet is playing. That's one of my favourite scenes, along with the death of Alec Guinness, which is a very striking shot.

I love the way that film uses music – each of the gang, and Mrs Wilberforce, has their own leitmotif. And as Guinness is standing there at the end, he gets a snatch of pastiche Elgar to celebrate his triumph. Then bam!, down comes the signal on his head.

That's lovely. And then you have *Mandy*, which is so much more intelligent than all the other films about rehabilitation.

Yes, compare it to a film like 'Johnny Belinda', which ends up with that easy affirmation in the final reel. With 'Mandy' the ending is optimistic, but only just. It's saying everything could still go wrong again.

That's what I see as the link between Powell and Mackendrick – you have the impression that the people making the film are intelligent, and they treat the audience as intelligent. In Powell's films there's a tremendous trust in the audience. *A Matter of Life and Death* or *The Man in the White Suit* weren't advertised as films for the elite, they were just ordinary films, opening at the Odeon Marble Arch after a run of some American film from MGM or Fox. It's not like today when a film by Godard, or Rivette, or Ken Loach or the Coen brothers is released – a certain number of people will know it's for them, and they go expecting to see a challenging film. Powell and Mackendrick were making films for the audience, expecting that any audience would be challenged. I find in them the sense of a culture, of a country, of a period.

A film like *'Mandy'* is very much about the condition of England at that stage.

It's something that's often present in French cinema and American cinema, but not so much in English cinema. There's a lack of a sense not just of the rest of the world, but sometimes of the rest of England in a lot of English films. There's not a deep sense of the country, of the spirit – except during the war, when you had marvellous films like *Millions Like Us*, which is for me the British equivalent of some of the Italian neo-realist films. It's very striking that Mackendrick had that, and that you have the feeling of a director working with the idea, the concept, of intelligence.

For Sandy, intelligence is a dramatic element. In a film like 'The Man in the White Suit', what people understand, what they perceive or fail to perceive, is the key to the drama.

Yes. In that way I find him close to Joseph Mankiewicz – working beyond the bounds of genre.

You once said "the great films are all hybrids", which is very apposite to Mackendrick, who loved mixing genres. 'The Man in the White Suit' is a comedy and a political satire and a science-fiction film.

It's true too of American films – the greatest films in the genre are always beyond the genre. If you take the best Westerns of Anthony Mann, they're Westerns, but in them they also have elements of film noir. John Ford, too – Westerns, but at the same time social films about collectivity, about family, also pieces of Americana and even political films in a way. The films which belong purely to a genre, and were often hailed as masterpieces when they came out, are now the most dated – like Mamoulian's *City Streets*. Of course, you can find exceptions, but most great films are a cross between genres or don't fit any genre, like *Sweet Smell of Success*.

Sandy liked to claim it was a comedy. It has noir elements, of course.

Yes, but it's also a political statement, and it has an element which is – not anti-Capra, but taking the darkest element of Capra that you find in *Meet John Doe* and making a whole film out of the Edward Arnold character. That's what makes Mackendrick's films fascinating at a time when so many English films were genre pieces like *The Titfield Thunderbolt*. That's purely a comedy, and not even about England, but about what you think should be the image of England you sell to the rest of the world. Mackendrick goes completely against that, even in *The Ladykillers*.

But Mackendrick is not only an underrated director, he's an unlucky one. He made so few films, and several of them got recut and mutilated – and then there are the films he couldn't make, or was sacked from. Yet he doesn't benefit from the image which now favours many directors of being a martyr, a victim of the system like Nicholas Ray or Orson Welles. *Sandy always refused to play that game – I think he was too proud, or maybe too bloody-minded. He used to say, "I treated the industry far worse than it ever treated me."*

But in a way he should have benefited from it, and I'm sure he could have, because there's a certain part of the capitalist system that likes to protect the maverick, the *artiste maudit*. They

would have been ready at one point, maybe in the 60s, maybe at the end of his life, to do that.

You know Marcel Aymé? In his book *Le Confort intellectuel* he has a character who has on his card "Poète maudit de première classe". Which fits so many directors of today. Before you even see their work, they have that label – although their films have been financed by the state, they're acclaimed, they have 25 books written about them, they're still *poète maudit*. There was something of that about Nicholas Ray at the end of his life, playing the victim. He was responsible, when you read Eisenschitz's book, for at least two-thirds of his own problems, by drinking, tricking money from people, betraying his screenwriters. A lot of victims are victims of themselves.

You could say that of Welles, in a way, though he had more nobility than Ray.

And of Robert Hamer – he too was a victim of himself through his drinking, but that happened because he was a victim of the system. Very few critics know anything about Hamer or what became of him. Which is extraordinary, since he made *Kind Hearts* and *Coronets*, one of Ealing's finest films.

The films he made after that have been forgotten. Have you seen *The Spider and the Fly*? It's nothing like *'Kind Hearts'*, but there's a raw anger about it.

No, I've never seen that, though I've wanted to for a long time, because I love *It Always Rains on Sunday*, and I like *Pink String* and *Sealing Wax*. Those films are unknown to French critics.

That's odd when you consider that *'It Always Rains on Sunday'* is as close as Britain ever got to *Carné*.

It had a small reputation when it first came out over here, but now it's totally forgotten. There's such a lack of curiosity – people never want to open their minds and reappraise things. I love to fight for films like that; you discover so much, it's stimulating, especially when you are yourself a director. I think it explains why I make a certain kind of film – I hope there's the same curiosity, the same openness in my films as I have in my life. My admiration and passion for certain directors, my desire to know their work better, is linked to the desire I have to dis-

cover certain periods, certain milieux which are not so popular. And when you're a filmmaker, preserving your admiration for other people is a good way to fight against your own ego, to stay young. Mackendrick is certainly one of those directors I treasure.

Did you know he almost made a precursor to *'Round Midnight'*? He was a great jazz-lover; he created that wonderful noise of the apparatus in *'The Man in the White Suit'* using a jazz record – Red Nichols, I think. One project he wanted to do and never did was *'Paris Blues'* from a novel by an American, Harold Flender. Nothing to do with the Martin Ritt film?

Yes, the same. The novel is about black American jazz musicians in Paris, and that's how Sandy wanted to make it. But no one would back a film with black actors playing the leads in a white milieu. So Martin Ritt took it on, and they made the black couple, played by Sidney Poitier and Diahann Carroll, into secondary roles, and brought in Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward to play the leads.

The script was by Walter Bernstein, a very talented screenwriter and a very nice guy – but he knew absolutely nothing about jazz, no feel for it at all. So it's a total mess, not only in terms of dialogue, but putting Django Reinhardt with Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington with... it's all over the place, no idea of jazz style.

I don't think Ritt knew much about jazz either. Sandy would have been the ideal director. He relished the score of *'Sweet Smell of Success'* that Elmer Bernstein and Chico Hamilton collaborated on. The whole film moves to a jazz rhythm, that edgy New York beat.

Mackendrick does something there which I always try to do – the direction has to express what's going on inside the character. So when he's going with, say, Tony Curtis, the pace, the image, the texture of the image is frantic. When I did *L'Horloger de Saint-Paul*, I wanted the camera to have the same movement as Noiret, the same speed as him, the same way of being pensive.

And when Lancaster is dominant in *'Sweet Smell of Success'*, the camera becomes deliberate and watchful. Yes, with Mackendrick the style is always subjected to the concept of the film. But it's not 'invisible style', as with Wyler or Stevens. It's

closer to Renoir, who has a totally different style in *La Règle du jeu* from *La Bête humaine*. He doesn't film the same way, doesn't shoot the same way, because he doesn't have to. He's not trying to get the same emotion and he's subordinating his style to the emotion of the film. But it's not like those Hollywood directors who say, "The direction must be invisible." This is bullshit. There are films where you don't notice the direction, but that doesn't mean it's invisible. Look at Mankiewicz.

It's because people have the idea that direction is only the camera angle. Direction is the movement of the actors within the frame, how they say a line, it's having a scene in close-up or in long-shot. The direction starts with the choice of actors. You notice the choice of every actor in Billy Wilder, because each one is chosen to perfection.

Sandy once said, "Casting is 90 per cent of the film. You choose your actors, you see what they're going to do, then you help them do it."

A film is made up of seven or so things, each of which is 90 per cent of the film, I would say. The screenplay is 90 per cent of the film, so is casting, work on the set, editing. Renoir always said about actors that you must not dictate – first you must see how the actor is going to react, and then either adapt yourself to it or change it, but always make him or her believe that he or she is creating. Certain actors you can control totally – I know I have, and I'm sure they thought they were utterly free – by doing it in an oblique way. I suspect Mackendrick was a very oblique director.

It's hard to think of a bad performance in his films. You can feel when you see a film whether or not the director knew how to handle actors. I like Mackendrick because he was getting risky performances – he took risks with his actors. Tony Curtis was always underrated, the kind of actor who is rediscovered every two, three years, but as Sidney Falco he's terrific.

Mackendrick brings out something no other director had seen – or maybe dared to see.

Yes, the same way as he uses all the actors in that film – like Emile Meyer, who plays the cop. It's a question of working below the surface of the actors, below the surface of the plot.

Sandy used to tell his students about building a plot out of the bare minimum. He called it "the Simenon principle" – taking a tiny point of friction and inflating it to the point of murder.

Wonderful idea! Again, that's something I try to do in my own films – it gets you out of the plot, it makes the emotion become the plot. I'm always fighting what I call the tyranny of the plot, where you have to have scenes just to resolve the intrigue. Simenon is never like that – the intrigue is naked, just the essence. I think you can feel that even in *The Man in the White Suit* – you have more character and less plot than in the other comedies of that period. And even in *Sweet Smell of Success*, the plot stuff is not what's best – the sister and the boyfriend and the drugs in the coat – what's good is the essence of the characters.

Mandy, which I've seen only once or twice, I remember less as a plot than as a series of emotions, whereas *Ordinary People*, to take an example, is only plot. It's an Agatha Christie ►

The snarl behind the grin: Alec Guinness in *'The Man in the White Suit'*



◀ murder mystery, except that instead of a murder you have a psychological mystery about somebody. A lot of American films are plot first and foremost. Not Ford or Hawks – some of the great directors were destroying the plot. In *The Big Sleep* you don't have any plot. You never know who shot whom – and who cares?

Right – you discover that once you have characters, the plot doesn't count. The "Simenon principle" – that's nearly as good as Robert Hamer saying that in his films he wanted to "have people doing beastly things to each other in dark rooms". I adore that remark – it immediately makes Hamer very sympathetic to me. It's very bold, too, because it wasn't at all fashionable at the time, though now that kind of attitude has become very fashionable.

David Lynch is doing just that.

Yes, in a rather snobbish way. Except it's not in dark rooms – it's in purple rooms with dazzling lighting.

You once said: "Filming means also being able to film words... I find this balance between 'the weight of words' and 'the shock of images' in all the films I love." I think that's very true of Mackendrick – he's a highly visual director, but also brilliant at handling dialogue. Directing dialogue is sometimes more difficult than creating a striking image. It demands intelligence, it demands comprehension. There's a whole school of directors now who are very gifted with visuals, but lost with words, which wasn't the case even with the great Hollywood action directors. Look at Raoul Walsh in *The Strawberry Blonde*, or the first half of *They Drive by Night*, or *Gentleman Jim* – the dialogue is superbly handled. Or Hathaway in *Fourteen Hours* – incredibly modern, and he's supposed to be a tough, macho director. Mackendrick, you can tell, had a feeling for words. He knew how to film Clifford Odets' dialogue, which is more than Odets himself ever could. Look at *None But the Lonely Heart* – absolutely disastrous. I think the sense of language links up with another trait of Mackendrick's – he was alive to words and meanings because he was a very political animal. There's an acute political sense in nearly all of Sandy's films, which is why I think you perhaps underestimate 'Whisky Galore'. There's a strong, subversive anarchist strain in that film.

I'll have to see it again. It's just that I found it visually less interesting, and when I last saw it I lost patience. I got exasperated with it, and with some of the characters.

Well, Sandy might have agreed with you – he used to say he couldn't watch it because it looked so amateurish. In some ways it's more conventional than his later films, though it doesn't cop out at the end – there's no easy reconciliation.

So many Ealing films are a cop-out. I think Michael Balcon put his finger on something which is crucial now – especially with the threat of American cinema – which is to preserve our identity, but there was also a failure of vision. He took the best of Britishness, but also the worst of it – like not dealing with politics, like always being in good taste, which means never trying anything daring.

It's the old English social sanction: you mustn't talk about sex or politics, especially at mealtimes. Not a convention Mackendrick paid much attention to.

I wouldn't think so.

MACKENDRICK FILMOGRAPHY

Born Boston, Mass., 8.9.1912
Died Los Angeles, 23.12.1993



Films directed by Mackendrick

1942

Save Your Bacon
(Kitchen Waste For Pigs)

90 seconds
Production Company: MacDougall and Mackendrick/Ministry of Information/Ministry of Food
Director/Drawings:

Alexander Mackendrick
Script: Roger MacDougall

1943

Contraries

90 seconds
Production Company: MacDougall and Mackendrick/Ministry of Information
Director/Drawings:

Alexander Mackendrick
Script: Roger MacDougall

Nero

90 seconds
Production Company: MacDougall and Mackendrick/Ministry of Information
Script: Roger MacDougall
Actors: Alastair Sim, George Cole
Mackendrick cut his directorial teeth with these three brief propaganda shorts, co-produced with his playwright cousin Roger MacDougall. As a director of actors he had some way to go – Sim, as Nero, gets away with shameless hamming – but the visual flair is already in evidence. For 'Contraries' he produced a series of (still) drawings of the Walrus and the Carpenter – fine pastiche Tenniel, but also full of an instinctive sense of movement and dramatic composition.

1949

Whisky Galore! (US: Tight Little Island)

82 minutes
Producer: Michael Balcon
(Ealing Studios)
Associate Producer:

Monja Danischewsky
Screenplay: Compton Mackenzie, Angus MacPhail (Alexander Mackendrick, Monja Danischewsky uncredited), from the novel by Compton Mackenzie

Photography: Gerald Gibbs
(Douglas Slocombe uncredited)

Music: Ernest Irving

Art Director: Jim Morahan

Editor: Joseph Sterling

(Charles Crichton uncredited)

Lead Actors: Basil Radford, Joan Greenwood, Willie Watson, Bruce Seton, Gordon Jackson
Mackendrick takes the standard Ealing comedy formula – small is beautiful, boo-sucks to authority – and puts a ruthless spin on it. Behind their facade of folksy charm, the Hebridean islanders of Todday are utterly without scruple, and woe betide anybody who blocks their way to the shipwrecked cargo of whisky. Their chief opponent, poor pigheaded, principled Captain Waggett, ends up a broken man, blown off the island in a callous gale of laughter. Yet so exhilarating is Mackendrick's depiction of the

islanders' communal vitality that we are drawn into complicity with them. Only moderately popular at first in Britain, the film scored a runaway success in America and France.

1951

The Man in the White Suit

85 minutes
Producer: Michael Balcon
(Ealing Studios)
Associate Producer: Sidney Cole
Screenplay: Roger MacDougall, John Dighton, Alexander Mackendrick, from the play by Roger MacDougall
Photography: Douglas Slocombe, Lionel Banes

Music: Benjamin Frankel

Art Director: Jim Morahan

Editor: Bernard Gribble

Lead Actors: Alec Guinness, Joan Greenwood, Cecil Parker, Ernest Thesiger, Michael Gough
Satire, said Mackendrick, is "the snarl behind the grin", and he shows his teeth to a purpose in this mordant, lethally funny critique of ossified, class-bound Britain. Only one thing can unite workers and bosses: faced with something new (an indestructible fabric) they instinctively gang up in a lynch-mob. A political cartoonist manqué, Mackendrick targets every entrenched position from strong-arm right to dug-in left, though never disguising his own socialist sympathies. And in confronting Alec Guinness' naive scientist with Ernest Thesiger's ancient, malignant tycoon, he gives us the first full statement of his perennial theme: the collision between innocence and experience, both equally self-absorbed and indifferent to the effect of their actions on others.

1952

Mandy (US: The Crash of Silence)

93 minutes
Producer: Leslie Norman
(Ealing Studios)
Screenplay: Nigel Balchin, Jack Whittingham, from the novel 'The Day Is Ours' by Hilda Lewis
Photography: Douglas Slocombe
Music: William Alwyn

Art Director: Jim Morahan

Editor: Seth Holt

Lead Actors: Phyllis Calvert, Jack Hawkins, Terence Morgan, Mandy Miller, Dorothy Alison, Godfrey Tearle
Mackendrick's only non-comedy at Ealing, this is a compassionate study of a child born deaf and struggling to achieve speech. A supreme director of children, Mackendrick draws from the seven-year-old Mandy Miller a performance of shattering intensity and total conviction. Beside such urgency, the film's parallel strand – the tensions within the parents' marriage – seems a little contrived, but is essential to Mackendrick's overall vision of a society where communication, emotional no less than physical, is blocked off and denied. Deafness in the child is the reflection, almost it seems the outcome, of mental blindness in the adults. The film ends with a triumph – Mandy speaks her own name and is accepted among her peers – but Mackendrick makes clear that it's a precarious triumph, no more than provisional. His endings are rarely happy and never comfortable.

1954

The Maggie (US: High and Dry)

92 minutes
Producer: Michael Truman
(Ealing Studios)
Screenplay: William Rose, Alexander Mackendrick
Photography: Gordon Dines
Music: John Addison

Art Director: Jim Morahan

Editor: Peter Tanner

Lead Actors: Paul Douglas, Alex Mackenzie, James Copeland, Abe Barker, Tommy Kearsins, Hubert Gregg

At the heart of every Mackendrick film lies the clash of irreconcilable perceptions. In his second Scottish comedy, a no-nonsense American executive, to whom time is money, is pitted against the crew of a rickety old cargo boat, for whom time is infinitely flexible. The plot suggests Ealing at its most complacent – lovable eccentrics versus heartless modern efficiency – but Mackendrick and his scriptwriter William Rose (both of them American-born) turn it into something more ambiguous. The American, beneath his hustle, is a sad, vulnerable figure, and the Scots are a bunch of rapacious incompetents. Though the battle of wits is diverting, with the sides more evenly matched than in 'Whisky Galore!', there's a vein of wry melancholy in 'The Maggie' that finally sinks the comedy.

1955

The Ladykillers

96 minutes
Producer: Michael Balcon
(Ealing Studios)
Associate Producer: Seth Holt
Screenplay: William Rose (Alexander Mackendrick, Seth Holt uncredited)
Photography: Otto Heller
Music: Tristram Cary
Art Director: Jim Morahan
Editor: Jack Harris
Lead Actors: Alec Guinness, Katie Johnson, Cecil Parker, Herbert Lom, Peter Sellers, Danny Green

The last great Ealing comedy, and Mackendrick's subversive farewell to the studio's most cherished values. In Mrs Wilberforce, the daffy, indomitable little old lady in her lopsided cottage above the railway lines, Mackendrick and Rose satirise with mingled irony and exasperation the sentimental attachment to the old and ramshackle that neither Ealing nor England could shake off. The film also gives full play to what Mackendrick described as his "perverted and malicious sense of humour". All his comedies share a quality of nightmare, where people struggle vainly against amorphous forces, but in 'The Ladykillers' the dream world takes over. As the final mayhem mounts amid a surreal landscape of tunnels and smoke, Guinness' vampire-toothed mastermind glimpses the awful truth: that Mrs W, most absolute of all Mackendrick's innocents, is eternal and invulnerable.

1957

Sweet Smell of Success

96 minutes
Producers: James Hill, Harold Hecht (Hecht-Hill-Lancaster)
Screenplay: Clifford Odets, Ernest Lehman, from the novella by Ernest Lehman
Music: Elmer Bernstein (Chico Hamilton uncredited)
Photography: James Wong Howe
Art Director: Edward Carrere
Editor: Alan Crosland Jr
Lead Actors: Burt Lancaster, Tony Curtis, Susan Harrison, Marty Milner, Barbara Nichols, Emile Meyer
The blackness of Mackendrick's vision found its finest expression in this ultra-noir masterpiece, a gleefully rancid slice of blackmail, corruption and twisted sexuality set in the paranoid nightworld of Manhattan showbiz journalism.

Responding to the professional drive of American movie-making, Mackendrick's film quivers with nervous energy, capturing as never before the pungent, zappy aggression of downtown New York. Tony Curtis, as the sleazily ambitious press agent, gives the performance of a lifetime, with Burt Lancaster's Winchellesque monster of a columnist running him close. Powered by Odets' gutter-baroque dialogue, Howe's gleaming photography and a raunchy, jazzy score from Bernstein and Hamilton, this is a movie with the tension and venom of a coiled rattlesnake.

1963

**Sammy Going South
(US: A Boy Ten Feet Tall)**

128 minutes
Producers: Michael Balcon, Hal Mason (Bryanston Seven Arts)
Screenplay: Denis Cannan, from the novel by W. H. Canaway
Photography: Erwin Hillier
Music: Tristram Cary
Art Director: Edward Tester
Editor: Jack Harris
Lead Actors: Edward G. Robinson, Fergus McClelland, Constance Cummings, Harry H. Corbett, Paul Stassino, Zia Mohyeddin
A ten-year-old boy, brutally orphaned in the bombing of Port Said, treks doggedly south to find his only relative 4,000 miles away in Durban. Mackendrick envisaged "the inward odyssey of a deeply disturbed child, who destroys everybody he comes up against." Production disasters – notably Edward G. Robinson's heart attack – blunted the edge of his conception and the film came out blander and less cruel than he had intended. But the opening scenes (the attack on Port Said) carry an emotional charge as devastating as anything in Mackendrick's output. And the film, his first in widescreen, is exceptionally beautiful to look at, with Mackendrick's innate sense of composition enhanced by a lyrical feel for the austere African landscapes.

1965

A High Wind in Jamaica

103 minutes
Producer: John Croydon (Elmo Williams uncredited)
Screenplay: Stanley Mann, Ronald Harwood, Denis Cannan (Alexander Mackendrick uncredited), from the novel by Richard Hughes
Photography: Douglas Slocombe
Music: Larry Adler
Art Director: John Hoesli
Editor: Derek York
Lead Actors: Anthony Quinn, James Coburn, Deborah Baxter, Dennis Price, Lila Kedrova
For years Mackendrick had longed to film Richard Hughes' novel of inept pirates destroyed by the children they capture. When at last he did, the studio took it away and ruthlessly cut it by 25 per cent. Even so, it remains a rich, complex film, full of sunlit melancholy, pacy and superbly photographed (Mackendrick's last collaboration with his favourite cinematographer, Douglas Slocombe). The hallucinatory strangeness of the original is cunningly recreated in purely cinematic terms. And in the fatal attraction between the pre-adolescent Emily and Anthony Quinn's floundering, bear-like pirate chief, Mackendrick gives us his most subtle and poignant exploration of the lethal nature of innocence. The film ends with an aching sense of loss.

1967

Don't Make Waves

97 minutes
Producers: John Calley, Martin Ransohoff (Filmways-Renard)
Screenplay: Ira Wallach, George Kirgo, Maurice Richlin (John Calley, Terry Southern uncredited), from the novel 'Muscle Beach' by Ira Wallach
Photography: Philip H. Lathrop
Music: Vic Mizzy
Art Directors: George W. Davis, Edward Carfagno
Editors: Rita Roland, Thomas Stanford
Lead Actors: Tony Curtis, Claudia Cardinale, Robert Webber, Joanna Barnes, Sharon Tate
'Sweet Smell of Success' reworked as a California beach comedy. Mackendrick loathed this film, which he maintained he was tricked into making, and the script flails off in all directions, never getting its characters or themes into focus. But Mackendrick still manages to work in some touches of sharp visual humour, and now and again, as Tony Curtis cons his way into the affections of shapely sky-diver Sharon Tate, the satire on West Coast materialism strikes home. After completing 'Waves' Mackendrick returned to England to work on two long-cherished projects, 'Rhinoceros' (from Ionesco's play) and 'Mary Queen of Scots'. Both fell through and Mackendrick, disillusioned, took up an invitation from the newly-founded California Institute of the Arts to become the first dean of its film school.

Films partly directed by Mackendrick

1944

**I Granai del Popolo
(Grain for the People)**

15 minutes
Producer: Alexander Mackendrick (Army Psychological Warfare Branch)
Directors: Alexander Mackendrick, Peter Proud
Script: Alexander Mackendrick
Photography: Giovanni Ventimiglia
Peter Proud: "Sandy was a charming man. And shy – quite different from the Mackendrick that's known in the industry now. Anyway, I went off and shot this film, came back to Rome – and Sandy didn't like my stuff at all, and reshot most of it. That was my first intimation of the severer side of his nature."

1945

Le Fosse Ardeatine (Massacre of the Fosse Ardeatine), second episode of Giorni di Gloria (Days of Glory)

22 minutes
Producer: Alexander Mackendrick (Army Psychological Warfare Branch)
Directors: Marcello Pagliero, Alexander Mackendrick
Script: Mario Serandrei, Ignazio Silone
Photography: Giovanni Ventimiglia
Mackendrick: "We sat there wearing ammonia masks while they pulled out these decomposing bodies. And at one point a workman was handling a corpse, and the head fell off and rolled away. He reached round and got hold of the wrong head, and was putting it back with the torso. And I found myself screaming with rage at him – then realised the terrible slapstick humour of it, and I and the unit broke into paroxysms of laughter."

1959

The Devil's Disciple

83 minutes
Producer: Harold Hecht (Hecht-Hill-Lancaster)

Director: Guy Hamilton (Alexander Mackendrick uncredited)
Screenplay: John Dighton, Roland Kibbee (Alexander Mackendrick uncredited), from the play by George Bernard Shaw
Photography: Jack Hildyard
Music: Richard Rodney Bennett
Lead Actors: Burt Lancaster, Kirk Douglas, Laurence Olivier, Janette Scott
Mackendrick directed about two weeks' shooting, including all Olivier's scenes, before being sacked by Hecht-Hill-Lancaster, allegedly for working too slowly. Mackendrick: "When people want to unload a director, the easy way is to claim he doesn't know what he's doing. But often they really mean he's trying to do something they don't want him to do."

1961

The Guns of Navarone

157 minutes
Producers: Carl Foreman, Cecil F. Ford (Open Road/Columbia)
Director: J. Lee Thompson (Alexander Mackendrick uncredited)
Screenplay: Carl Foreman, from the novel by Alistair Maclean
Photography: Oswald Morris
Music: Dimitri Tiomkin
Lead Actors: Gregory Peck, David Niven, Anthony Quinn, Stanley Baker, Anthony Quayle, Irene Papas
Mackendrick shot a few days' footage on Rhodes before being replaced by Lee Thompson. Oswald Morris: "Sandy was working very hard, he never stopped. But we didn't actually turn much film in the camera. He wanted tracking shots in the most inaccessible places, so we had to get dollies up there on mules... I don't think that went down too well with the powers that be."

1967

Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mama's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad

86 minutes
Producers: Ray Stark, Stanley Rubin (Seven Arts/Rastar)
Directors: Richard Quine, Alexander Mackendrick
Screenplay: Ian Bernard, from the play by Arthur Kopit
Photography: Geoffrey Unsworth, Charles Lawton Jr
Music: Neal Hefti
Lead Actors: Rosalind Russell, Robert Morse, Barbara Harris, Hugh Griffith, Jonathan Winters, Lionel Jeffries
After Quine's film had flopped at previews, Mackendrick was called in to shoot some additional scenes with Jonathan Winters. Mackendrick: "It was dreadful, because I couldn't cope with Winters. He's a very funny man, but he was uncomfortable with me and I was uncomfortable with him." 'Oh Dad' was a critical and box-office disaster.

Films scripted by Mackendrick for other directors

1936-38

On Parade (1936)

7 minutes

Sky Pirates (1937)

6 minutes

Love on the Range (1937)

6 minutes

What Ho She Bumps (1937)

7 minutes

South Sea Sweethearts (1938)

6 minutes

Production Company: J. Walter Thompson for Horlicks
Director/Animation: George Pal
Script/Storyboard: Alexander Mackendrick
A series of five Horlicks commercials

devised by Mackendrick for George Pal, master of stop-action puppet animation. Fluent, colourful and exuberant, they wittily spoof all kinds of movie genres.

1937

**Midnight Menace
(US: Bombs over London)**

78 minutes

Producer: Harcourt Templeman (Grosvenor Sound Films)
Director: Sinclair Hill
Screenplay: G. H. Moresby-White, D. B. Wyndham-Lewis
Original Story: Roger MacDougall, Alexander Mackendrick
MacDougall and Mackendrick's original script was sold to Grosvenor, who substantially rewrote it. Mackendrick: "Roger and I wondered whether, if they'd followed our story closely, it would have made much difference, and we decided yes, it would have been even worse."

1940

**Carnival in the Clothes Cupboard
Fable of the Fabrics**

5 minutes each

Production Company: J. Walter Thompson for Lux
Directors/Animation: John Halas, Joy Batchelor
Script/Storyboard: Alexander Mackendrick
Train Trouble
8 minutes
Production Company: J. Walter Thompson for Kelloggs
Directors/Animation: John Halas, Joy Batchelor
Script/Storyboard: Alexander Mackendrick
John Halas: "I owe to Sandy whatever little skill I have in thinking about story structure, character development and continuity... He taught Joy Batchelor and myself how to prepare a script visually... And he was a brilliant draughtsman."

1943

**Abu Series: Abu's Dungeon;
Abu's Poisoned Well; Abu's Harvest;
Abu Builds a Dam**

9 minutes each

Production Company: Halas-Batchelor for Ministry of Information
Directors/Animation: John Halas, Joy Batchelor
Script: Alexander Mackendrick, Nuri

1944

Subject for Discussion

15 minutes

Producer: Basil Wright (Seven League/Council for Health Education)
Director: Hans Nieter
Script: Roger MacDougall, Alexander Mackendrick
Mackendrick: "The idea of showing films about VD in public cinemas was a complete contradiction, for most young couples, of the purpose of going to the cinema. So our device was not to make a film about VD, but a film – which isn't very good, but could have been a lot worse – about whether VD is a fit topic for discussion."

1948

**Sara band for Dead Lovers
(US: Saraband)**

96 minutes

Producer: Michael Balcon (Ealing Studios)
Director: Basil Dearden
Screenplay: John Dighton, Alexander Mackendrick (Mackendrick also storyboarded the film), from the novel by Helen Simpson
Mackendrick: "Johnny [Dighton] taught me more than I can say... What I would do was cut down his dialogue, introduce business and so on. Then I would work out something

in visual terms and put in terribly bad dialogue that Johnny would rewrite. In the end, trained by him, I became not a bad dialogue writer."

1950

The Blue Lamp

84 minutes

Producer: Michael Relph (Ealing Studios)
Director: Basil Dearden
Screenplay: T. E. B. Clarke, Ted Willis, Jan Read, Alexander Mackendrick (credited for Additional Dialogue; he also directed the second unit)
T. E. B. Clarke: "Sandy was quite different in many ways from the rest of us – mostly in intellectual ways. I think he was more downbeat than the average at Ealing, which was rather an upbeat studio."

1950

Dance Hall

80 minutes

Producer: Michael Balcon (Ealing Studios)
Director: Charles Crichton
Screenplay: E. V. H. Emmett, Diana Morgan, Alexander Mackendrick (who also directed the second unit)
Diana Morgan: "Sandy was very pernickety – in a perfectly nice way."

1958

Fanfare

93 minutes

Producer: Rudolf Meyer (Sapphire)
Director: Bert Haanstra
Screenplay: Bert Haanstra, Jan Blokker
Script Assistance: Alexander Mackendrick
Mackendrick was called in by Haanstra to advise on the script. 'Fanfare', a comedy, became one of the most successful Dutch movies ever. Haanstra: "It would never have got there without that brilliant teacher, Alexander Mackendrick."

Television drama directed by Mackendrick

1964

The Hidden Fury, episode 90 of The Defenders (third series)

Broadcast CBS TV, 28 March 1964
50 minutes
Producer: Herbert Brodtkin (CBS)
Script: Reginald Rose
Lead Actors: E. G. Marshall, Robert Reed, Susan Oliver, Joseph Anthony
Mackendrick: "We did very rapid rewrites the weekend before, then shot ten minutes a day and came in bang on schedule. Dumb thing as it was, it's journalism, so it goes with a gusto and an energy – and it proved that those people who said I can't shoot fast were full of crap."

Television commercials directed by Mackendrick

1958-59

Eight commercials for Horlicks: Record Player (1958); Fireside (1958); Kitchen – Broken Dish (1958); Milk Bottle (1958 – co-directed by Karel Reisz); Shop (1959); Conveyer Belt (1959); Tea Party (1959); Clothes Dryer (1959)

45 seconds each

Production Company: J. Walter Thompson
Script: Jeremy Bullmore, Alexander Mackendrick
Jeremy Bullmore: "It was the first time I realised that you didn't write film, you thought it – and wrote it down afterwards. It was Sandy who made me see that you could communicate without a word of dialogue... [But] he was very contemptuous of anyone who tried to keep within the budget." Compiled by Philip Kemp

Attacked by the far right, controversial within the black gay community, Marlon Riggs' films resist easy options.

Kobena Mercer remembers an important film-maker

BLACK IS... BLACK AIN'T

● When Marlon Riggs died on 5 April 1994, independent cinema lost the voice and vision of an important artist at the very moment when he was coming into his own. With three major documentary films behind him – *Ethnic Notions* (1986), *Tongues Untied* (1989) and *Color Adjustment* (1992) – Riggs was working on an investigation into the cultural diversity of black identities, *Black Is... Black Ain't*, when his life was cut short, at the age of 37, by Aids. Like so many other influential black gay men of his generation – including critic James Snead, writer Joseph Beam and activist Craig Harris – Riggs' death bears witness to a bitter tragedy: that the "talented tenth" of queer negro artists and intellectuals, who have been in the vanguard of the renaissance of black culture in the US and UK during the 80s and 90s, have helped create new forms of collective identity among black lesbians and gay men and have achieved so much in displacing outmoded racial and sexual paradigms, are now menaced by the spectre of premature death.

But Riggs' legacy is very much alive and is fully part of the almost daily re-evaluation of the ethics of multicultural diversity in this volatile moment. In a climate of deepening uncertainty, in which the fragmentation of social identities has been dominated by a politics of resentment, Riggs held a crucial position as a multi-dimensional media activist. His roles of film-maker, lecturer, writer and advocate, pursued with prodigious energy, all contributed to the formation of a new politics of recognition which he sought to bring to public attention with urgency and passion. *Tongues Untied* remains his key work, not only because it was the first of its kind – a coming-out film for black gay men – nor because its struggle for self-representation was linked to the analysis of racial representation put forward in *Ethnic Notions* and *Color Adjustment*, but because its imperfections and rough edges offer fresh points of contact and contention. This is why the film retains its live and direct quality some five years after it was made.

Riggs came to film from journalism. He graduated *magna cum laude* from Harvard in 1978 and in 1981 received his master's degree from the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, where he subsequently became one of the youngest tenured professors. With broadcast-quality video as his medium, his first work on the urban blues music scene in his adopted city of Oakland located him within the black independent tradition of documentary

realism established by African-American directors and producers such as William Greaves, Pearl Bowser, Henry Hampton, St Clair Bourne, Louis Massiah and Carroll Parrot Blue. Equally influenced by the Bay Area tradition of lesbian and gay counter-information, exemplified by such classic documentaries as *Word Is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives* and *The Times of Harvey Milk*, he found himself straining against the limits of the positive/negative images dichotomy common to black and gay counter-cinemas. What differentiated his project was his concern with the power of images *per se*.

Sermon to jazz

In the deconstruction of 150 years of racial stereotyping that he undertook in his Emmy award-winning *Ethnic Notions*, Riggs asked why the nineteenth-century repertoire of Sambo, Mammy, Uncle Tom and Pickaninnie remains so vivid in the American imagination. By dissecting the ambiguous emotional attachments that keep such stereotypes alive in the hearts and minds of those who would repudiate them, black and white alike, Riggs allowed for a deeper understanding of the way images unconsciously affect identities. In *Color Adjustment*, which examines primetime television portrayals of blacks, Riggs brought to light hidden continuities, from blackface minstrels to squeaky-clean sitcom respectability, in the fears and fantasies black images are made to represent. Advertisers boycotted *The Nat King Cole Show* in the late 50s on the grounds that the sight of a charming and intelligent black man might alienate middle-class white families, who were precisely the target demographic sought by the neo-conservative *The Cosby Show* in the Reaganite 80s. That *Color Adjustment* won US television's highest accolade, a George Foster Peabody Award, is an acknowledgment of the insight and impact of Riggs' analytical interventions.

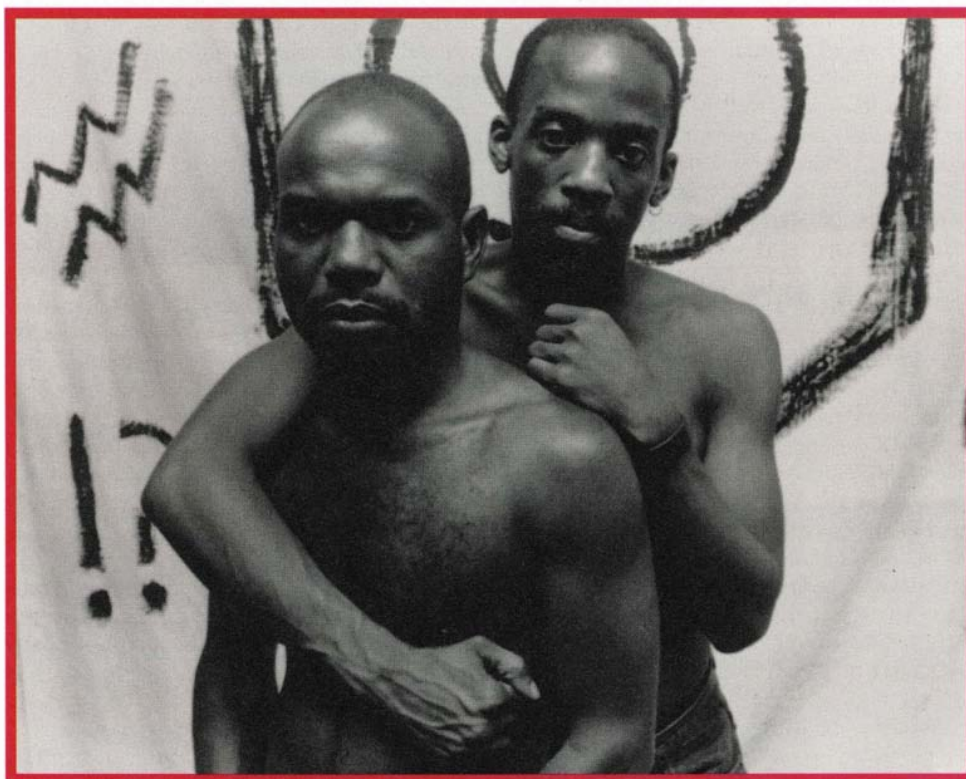
Todd Gitlin, dean of UCB's School of Journalism, has said. "*Tongues Untied* is extraordinary. To make a poetic, personal film in a culture that likes its documentaries matter-of-fact, that's a breakthrough." Indeed, *Tongues Untied* also broke through the walls of silence by which oppressive norms and taboos erase any 'evidence of being' among black lesbians and gay men. But to be the first black or gay person to speak out is a dubious privilege. When so-called minorities are expected to speak as representatives of entire communities, such a burden of responsibility is sure to weigh heavily on your shoulders, give you

an endless headache, and completely ruin your outfit. The real breakthrough Riggs achieved was to give expression to a marginalised group while steering clear of the pitfalls of the role of megaminority spokesperson.

The video's montage of scenes and stories depicts aspects of black gay life from adolescent experiences of racism and homophobia, through coming out into a mostly white gay world, to moments of solidarity, pleasure and mutual recognition among black gay men. But such a linear description does little justice to the sass and authority with which *Tongues Untied* speaks as it taps into the African-American tradition of witness and testimony. A chorus of black gay voices – poets Essex Hemphill and Allan Miller, the music of Blackberri and the *a cappella* Lavender Light quartet, members of the Bay Area group Black Gay Men United – is woven around Riggs' autobiographical story. What results is not the impersonal, voice-of-God narrative that would set the director up as the authentic representative of a homogenous community, but rather a finely wrought medley of call and response which, as in a preacher's sermon or improvised jazz, produces a dynamic encounter between artists and audience in which truth is revealed through testimony.

Metaphors of being oppressed by silence or of the emancipatory power of speech may sound *passé* to post-modern cinemagoers who feel the politics of identity has had its day. But such a view misses the point that within the African-American cultural text, these figures of speech perform what literary critic Henry Louis Gates calls *signifyin'* – a term that encompasses a variety of verbal styles, from the dozens to louding, capping and snapping, which emerged in answer to the dilemma of how to name yourself in a language which has named you as its Other. Or, as Gates puts it, "how can the black subject posit a fully and sufficient self in a language in which blackness is a sign of absence?"

Other queer black film-makers who grappled with the question of self-representation include Riggs' counterparts in Britain, such as Isaac Julien, director of *The Attendant*, *Young Soul Rebels* and *Looking for Langston* and Pratibha Parmar, director of *Warrior Marks*, *Khush* and *A Place of Rage*, as well as his fellow African American Michelle Parkerson, director of *Gotta Make This Journey: Sweet Honey in the Rock and Stormé: The Lady of the Jewel Box* about a majestic black lesbian male impersonator and her club in Washington DC. What has emerged is not a uniform black



An unsettling gaze: Marlon Riggs' montage of black gay life, 'Tongues Untied'

queer cinema, but a shared aesthetic sensibility and ethical outlook which recognises the value of *difference* as an unmitigated good. In an age of post-modern and post-colonial globalisation, black lesbian and gay film-makers are contributing something of vital importance to world cinema, not simply because they feed the neglected needs of specialised audiences, but because they value the role cinema plays as an arena of cultural dialogue in which all sorts of audiences have the opportunity to adjust their images of themselves.

In this respect, the impact of *Tongues Untied* on audiences who are neither black nor gay, nor remotely interested in adjusting their image of themselves, should be acknowledged. *Tongues Untied* was funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts and when it was aired on US public television this fact was exploited by New Right fundamentalists eager to fan the flames ignited by Senator Jesse Helms in his attack on a publicly funded retrospective of homoerotic photography by Robert Mapplethorpe. Far-right columnist Pat Buchanan even used a clip from the film in his television advertisement during the 1992 presidential campaign

in order to accuse George Bush of misuse of tax-payers' money to fund a rainbow coalition. Seizing the editorial pages of the *New York Times*, Riggs met his enemies eye to eye and proceeded to "read the riot act" to the political establishment, arguing that "Race-baiting has now been fused with a brazen display of anti-gay bigotry. The persecution of racial and sexual difference is becoming the litmus test of true Republican leadership."

Black and white

In the culture wars of the early 90s, Riggs stood more or less alone in defending *everyone's* right to representation. Yet his work provoked an equally fierce controversy in the black gay community. Taking up writer Joe Beam's call for solidarity expressed in the slogan "Black men loving black men is the revolutionary act", *Tongues Untied* unleashed a heated debate on the subject of inter-racial relationships which turned on the apparent discrepancy between the video's concessions to cultural nationalism and the fact that Riggs' life-partner of 15 years, Jack Vincent, is white. While movies such as *Jungle Fever* and *The Bodyguard* show that this is a topic which upsets

everyone, what was lost in the demand for a 'perfect' representation of black gay life was the opportunity for a broader debate, as B. Ruby Rich has argued, on why we remain tethered to ancient fears and fantasies about difference when it comes to sexuality and eroticism.

In the name of cultural decolonisation, Cuban film-maker Jose Garcia Espinosa called for an "imperfect cinema", a cinema whose very gaps make it a living part of a public dialogue about the nature and direction of progressive social politics. This may sound deeply untrendy in the face of the shiny New Jack cinema of Spike Lee, Matty Rich, John Singleton *et al.* But the kind of cinema Riggs struggled to bring into being – in his passion for truth-telling and distaste for the hypocrisy that often characterises what Michael Eric Dyson has called "the racial unity narrative" in African-American culture – is a cinema that is not afraid of difference or of being unpopular when it comes to speaking the truth.

"I am a black gay man living with AIDS. My work is expanding the way we use film and video to tell stories about our lives as black people." In his commitment to an ethics of honesty that owed everything to the communal love and wisdom embodied in the Afro-Christian tradition in which he was raised (he once told me his parents thought he might become a preacher), Riggs created a rich legacy of work that is a valuable contribution to a fully inclusive cinematic vision of what our identities might be. Moving images are inherently about loss and memory. In the painful acknowledgment of his passing, there is a joyful obligation to treasure his memory in a way that Riggs' own words best reveal:

"At the end of *Tongues Untied* I flash a number of photos of black men who have died of AIDS. These images initially signify death. Eventually, the photos start to turn into a number of ancestral figures that have been so important to my life: Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King Jr. For me, these faces have transcended death. We continually remember these people; they resonate in our lives from generation to generation. I believe in humanity, in our ability to connect over generations and even beyond death to move forward as black people. And this defines my spiritual perspective, too. My connection is not to some invisible, overbearing God – it is to other human beings. Through this, I believe, lies our ultimate possibility of redemption."

'A Flame Extinguished – Marlon Riggs 1957–1994' is at the NFT on 2 and 5 August at 8.30pm

In a candid interview, Bill Forsyth explains what went wrong when he worked in Hollywood on 'Being Human', a \$20 million film starring Robin Williams. By Allan Hunter

BEING HUMAN

● *Being Human* is Bill Forsyth's first film in five years. Following the release of *Breaking In* in 1989 he returned to his native Scotland and worked with producer Chris Sievernich on *Rebecca's Daughters*, a Dylan Thomas screenplay from the 40s. That project subsequently fell to Dusan Makavejev before finally being filmed by Karl Francis. *Being Human*, an original Forsyth screenplay, was financed by Warner Bros. The film's production history illustrates some of the difficulties encountered by British film-makers such as Forsyth, Stephen Frears and Mike Figgis as they work within the Hollywood studio system and struggle to discover a common meeting ground for their maverick sensibilities and the more conventional aspirations of their backers. I asked Forsyth how the idea for the movie began.

"When I was working on *Breaking In* in Toronto, somebody in Hollywood was trying to get me interested in a film. I never got a script but I got a treatment and, because Bill Murray was interested in it, I had to give it some attention. The basic idea was about a really bad guy – a hit man for a sleazy New York gangster who used to beat up old ladies and kill pet dogs and do all the things bad guys do in American movies – who gets killed. He goes to Hell, and Hell is a funny place full of guys like the Beastie Boys. But because someone has mixed up the book-keeping, he has to go back – in a woman's body – and he gets another chance.

"I kept getting phone calls and trying to say no as politely as possible. The ultimate thing I said was that I didn't want to be involved in a movie that deals with something that isn't real. I'm never going to be involved with a movie that has ghosts in it, that is about time travel or space travel or body-swapping or whether someone goes to Heaven or Hell. She said, 'Well, how would you make it then?', and suddenly the whole idea came to me. You wouldn't have time travel, but the movie can travel through

time because that's what movies are good at. You would have five different people all played by the same actor. They exist in different periods and they would be real and live and die, grow and change and it would be the substance of their experience that connected them. I was about to say all this down the phone when I stopped myself and thought 'this is a fabulous idea for a film.'"

Forsyth spent the bulk of 1990 researching the historical background to his script. The film begins in Scotland, where caveman Hector is separated from his wife and family by well-mannered marauders. The character's journey continues through slavery and death in ancient Rome, a frustrating mediaeval encounter with a warm-hearted widow, a shipwreck during the age of exploration and an awkward attempt to connect with his children in modern-day New York as he picks up the threads of his life after serving a four-year jail sentence. An ode to the loneliness of the long-distance spirit, the script was seen by Forsyth as a reaction against the way that mainstream Hollywood films tend to view the world.

"We are alone. No other individual has any idea how you see the world. You have no idea how I see this room or the street outside or what Sunday means to me. We are alone, but that's not a negative thing. It's something to be celebrated. A lot of Hollywood movies try to comfort people with the idea of something beyond them – a god, or a ghost of someone they love. I think that's a cheat. Movies about time travel or space are entertainment, but in a more subtle and sinister way they are also telling people 'don't worry, don't think, whatever fears you have you're not alone'. The whole propaganda machinery is geared towards patting you on the head. I hope *Being Human* goes the other way and says, 'Look, you are dreadfully alone and every human being that has lived and breathed has been just as alone as you, but that's great. There's no way you're going to travel through time or survive mortality or go up to Heaven. You're going to live and die and you're going to cease, you're going to be an absolute nothingness. Instead of that being a problem, celebrate it and celebrate that you are connected to every other living being by the sheer fact that you've shared these experiences and that never stops.'"

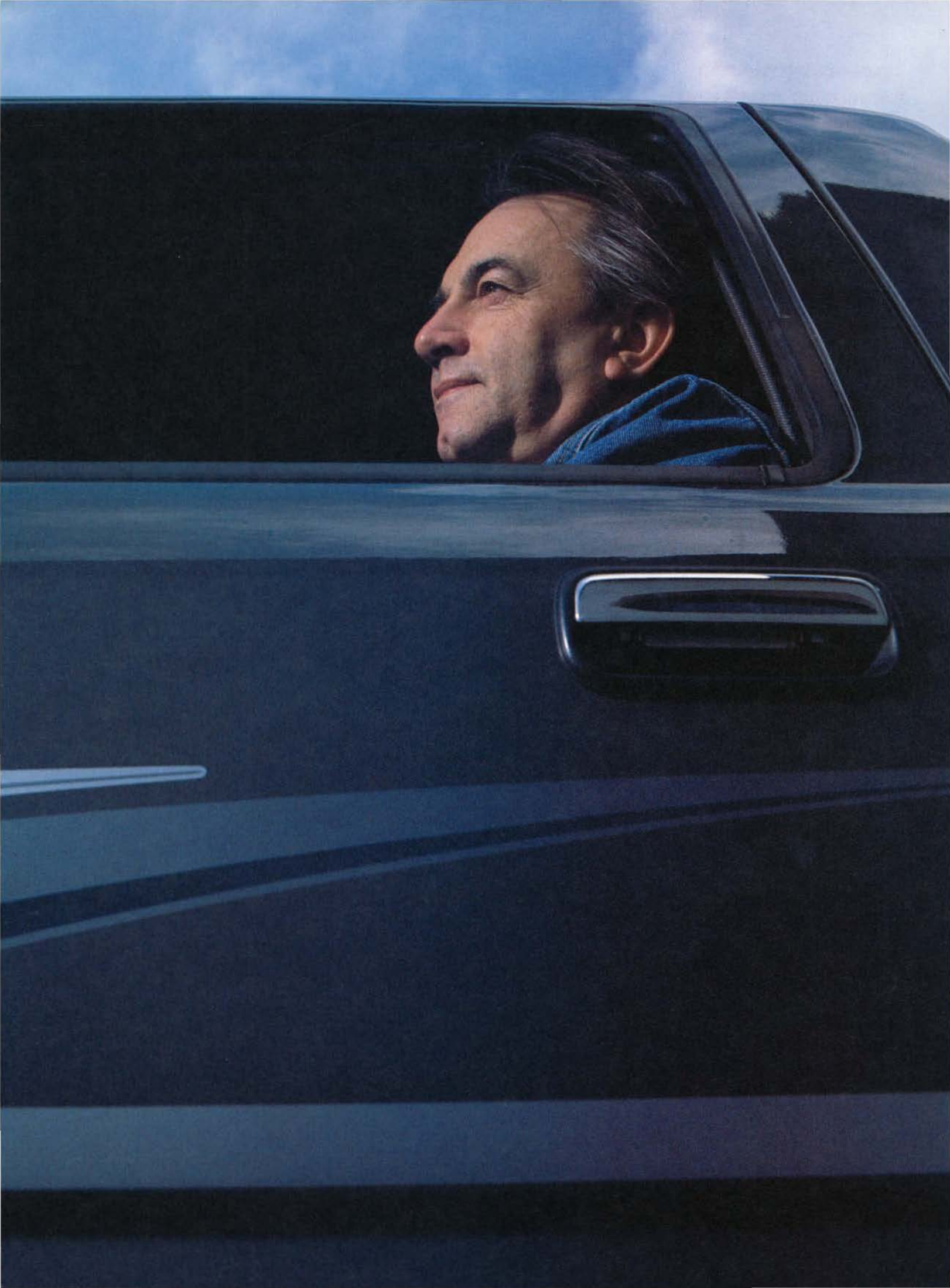
The script was completed between January and May 1991. Just as the theme of the film is in opposition to conventional Hollywood mentality, so the style of its presentation was to be equally unorthodox. "It's trying to confound your expectations of a narrative movie by turning back on itself all the time and not going anywhere. It's trying to say, 'Stop and look and listen, don't do anything else, don't worry

about where you're going or where you've been. The only thing that matters is what you're watching and feeling right this minute. It doesn't matter what's going to happen in ten minutes' time because this guy is going to be in a different costume. You know that he's going to live and die, that's all you have to know, so just enjoy it moment by moment.' Whether it says that to you in a loud or a small voice, that's what it's trying to communicate."

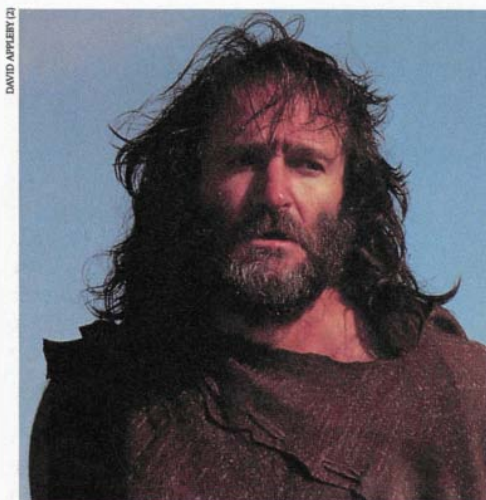
Once the script was finished, Forsyth began talks with the French company CiBy 2000 through Robert Colesberry, the producer of *Housekeeping*. CiBy was willing to come up with a budget of between \$12 and 14 million, but the scale of the project demanded a larger sum. Once Robin Williams became interested, Forsyth was able to approach Warner Bros, which offered a budget of \$20 million and a promise of worldwide distribution. The possibility that *Local Hero* producer David Puttnam might come on board was an added incentive to the studio, which has an ongoing development and production deal with Puttnam's company. By the end of 1991 the deal had been accepted.

"I suppose in a way I was naive. It was out of innocence that I pursued it, and once you get someone like Robin interested, you feel you're unstoppable. At the time Warners said, 'It'll either be wonderful or it won't make a buck. It'll reach out and grab people or it won't.' I think I realised that we had completely different takes on the movie because if I had to sum it up in a phrase, I would say it's about the fact that for the individual human being, spiritually nothing changes and nothing ever will, whether you're a caveman or a lawyer. But they had this thing about experience changing you and expressed ideas that these Hectors were somebody who was getting better as he went along. I fundamentally, happily knew that that wasn't my intention, but if I'd said that in an office at Burbank that would have been the end of it."

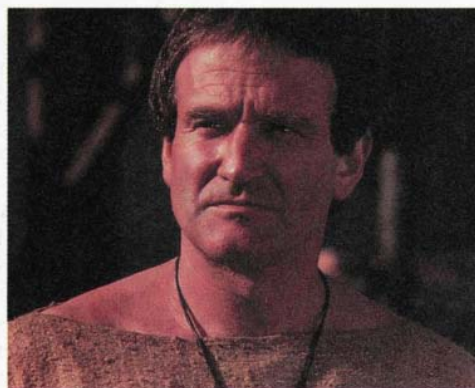
"So the whole thing was based on a kind of misinterpretation. We were both labouring under misapprehensions that were never honestly addressed because, by then, we were into the language of negotiation and wanted to avoid confrontation. Really, they wanted to buy my idea but not my sensibility and I wanted their money but none of their propagandist crap. These things were never said, of course. You can be so easily beguiled. I spent a year writing it and then I just put a stamp on it and sent it away to my agent in America. Everyone was so enthusiastic about the script and wanted to send it to every name actor you can think of. You think, 'This is great, it's so easy making films.' What I should have been say-



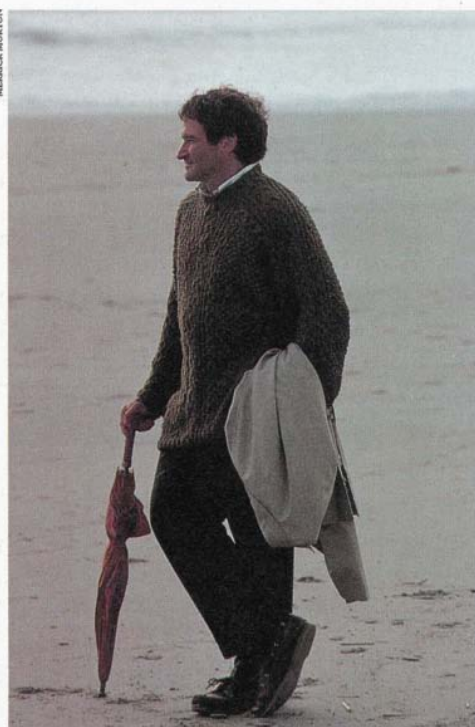
At one preview an elderly woman asked Forsyth if he was connected with the film. When he confirmed that he was, her response was 'Dig a hole and bury it'



A man for all ages: Robin Williams



Travelling onwards: Roman Robin



Washed up: abandoned Robin

ing to myself is 'What film do I want to make?' But by this time they had already envisaged what film they thought the script represented and I was just chasing that dream. I don't ever remember saying 'What do I want to do with this?' It was more 'What do I have to do to get this made?' From the second draft onwards, it was all about problem-solving."

As Forsyth worked on the final draft of the script and began scouting for locations, Warner Bros became involved in the casting. "Before I became interested in Robin Williams one of the early thoughts I had was John Malkovich. I naively thought he was a 'name', but to the studios a name is someone who can open a film and apparently he can't do that. Even with Robin on board, Warners still needed reassurance. I remember the studio head said, 'I don't want people to go see this movie and end up seeing Robin Williams in a foreign movie.' They wanted some familiar faces, which means American faces, so we went through a torturous process of considering many options. Steve Martin was suggested as someone who would be good as a Roman senator. I have great respect for Steve Martin, but the idea of him and Robin in togas trying to be serious about death is guaranteed to make an audience laugh [the role of Lucinnius is played by John Turturro]. Casting the widow Beatrice involved weeks of going through all the American women who could play the part. I wanted someone who didn't speak English, but was asked to consider Susan Sarandon, for instance, because she could speak French [the role eventually went to Italian actress Anna Galiena]. When we ended up with Hector Elizondo as Dom Paulo in the shipwreck sequence they were very reassured because of his connections with *Pretty Woman*."

Warner Bros was also keen to raise the emotional temperature, an issue to be resolved by ending the film with Hector embracing his son. "The original ending was quite tart. It ended with Hector and his two children on the beach and you just left them in mid-conversation. I know as a dramatist I'm very cold – I think two or three degrees cooler than most of the rest of humanity because I'm terrified of sentimentality. I think the studio was a little apprehensive about me as a deliverer of emotions, which is where the idea of the hug came in. They argued that he's found his kids after having been away for four years, so surely the first thing they'll do is hug? I tried to make that organic to the piece by having Hector ask his daughter what's wrong with his son and she would tell him that he's just a little boy and all he needs is a hug. I thought that was quite clever because it took the sting out of the slush and was at the same time revealing another deficiency in Hector, who couldn't cope even

with this simple thing. I don't know whether I'm just cosmeticising the fact that I gave in, but at the time it seemed a strong way to solve the problem. I can joke about it, but probably if I hadn't written that hug into the second draft I wouldn't have got the film financed. In a crude way, it is a \$20 million hug."

Filming began in Scotland in September 1992, moving on to studio work at Pinewood and further location shooting in Morocco and California. The experience of being at the helm of a \$20 million production created a pressure Forsyth had not anticipated. "The size and scale of it were an utter shock. Because people read the script and perceived it as a big movie, it suddenly became a big movie. When we started shooting on that beach in Sutherland, the size of the crew and the logistics of the operation were overwhelming. The ambition I had for the movie was that it was going to be observational – you were going to get the feeling that you were there, the tactile feeling of being present. What I wanted with Robin and the cave kids in Scotland was the chance just to spend a day with them – he might have made dolls with some bones or the kids would learn about fire and we might have got a minute's worth of stuff out of that day of them just relating to each other. I thought that's what all that money would buy me, but all the money was buying me was an absolutely rigid schedule. So I was running from behind from the first week, I felt I was just turning up, getting shots and covering another page of the script."

Problems intensified when part of the shooting scheduled for Kenya was relocated at the last minute to Morocco because insurance cover for malaria was prohibitive. So a shipwreck in a lush jungle setting was suddenly transformed into a shipwreck on a deserted beach. Forsyth spent the rest days in Morocco rewriting the script to accommodate the changes. "In the original script the shipwreck sequence opens at sea with a couple of hundred survivors on a raft as dawn breaks. Water is seeping through the planks and a dead body is tossed overboard. We built a raft out of steel and flotation tanks. In Kenya we had had a lagoon bay where you could take the raft out less than half a mile, you had a clear horizon and you could shoot the whole thing at dawn. Then we were in the Atlantic in November with 15-foot-high waves coming in. We anchored the raft off-shore and came back in the morning to find it in bits. Your instinct as a director is to say build it again, but then people say if it does that when it's just anchored, what will it do with 200 extras on board and a camera? So I rewrote the scene setting it on the beach after they've come ashore. A lot of imagery went and it took a lot of sting out of the scene. The transition

DAVID APPELBY
between the Roman and mediaeval scenes was to be a hat blown off in one sequence and retrieved in another, but practical problems also made this impossible. I wanted these transitions to be glorious, sweeping things that take your breath away, but one by one they were diminished."

Shooting was completed in spring 1993 and within four weeks there was a first assembly of footage that ran for 2 hours 40 minutes. The film was subject to an audience preview in Slough; subsequent previews in the US, including an 85-minute cut prepared by the studio, encountered reactions that ranged from bewilderment to hostility. At one preview an elderly woman asked Forsyth if he was connected with the film. When he confirmed that he was, her response was "Dig a hole and bury it".

"We got very bogged down in the preview process, which was something a film like this was never intended for. But there's an industrial process that takes over because Hollywood studios have a traditional approach to testing and marketing a film that has to be gone through. This film was almost designed not to perform at previews because of the subversive aspirations I'd always held for it. People are being asked 'Did you like the story? Did you prefer the beginning, the middle or the end?' when it doesn't have a beginning, a middle or an end, its approach is anti-narrative. Or 'which character did you prefer?' when it has Robin Williams playing five different Hectors. That creates confusion for a start. The interesting thing is that with all those previews the numbers didn't change more than 1 or 2 per cent in any category. In other words, the same number of people who thought the movie was slow at 2 hours 40 minutes thought it was slow at 85 minutes, which belies the whole basis of what they were doing."

Polled on their interest in seeing a film with the message that everyone is alone in the world, audiences responded with almost universal antipathy. The cumulative effect of market research and previewing was to provoke a crisis mentality and a desperate quest to salvage the enterprise.

"We had a big meeting on a Friday and the head of Warners, Terry Semel, ordered all the footage to be shipped to Hollywood where we would work on it with editors to fix it and create the best film we could. Dede Allen, the head of editing who works as a kind of editing doctor, was in there right after the first preview and the plan was for us all to work together for the good of the film. I sat there somewhat shell-shocked, agreeing to this and saying that I needed to go home and get some clothes and things. I caught a taxi straight to the airport, flew home and didn't go back. My agents were



Alone together: Bill Forsyth with Robin Williams

very good at this point. I said I'd given them two different versions of the movie over the last four months and that if they wanted to change it radically it was up to them. I said I would watch whatever they did with an open mind and if they had found a way of presenting what I want to present to a mass audience, then I'll embrace it. They had it for six weeks with Claire Simpson [*Salvador*, *Platoon*] working under Dede Allen's supervision, and then finally after they went through all that process, they said you can have it back."

Back in Britain, Forsyth continued to work on the film. The addition of a voiceover had been suggested as one means of making the film more accessible. Forsyth was offered a list of 14 writers, including Buck Henry, who the studio would have been happy to hire to write the narration. Two versions of a voiceover written by Forsyth and narrated by Williams were previewed before the decision was taken to try a female voice. Forsyth worked with Scots playwright Liz Lochhead on a further voiceover to be spoken by Theresa Russell. This version, completed in February 1994, was not previewed but was released in the US on 6 May. Showing on 224 screens, it achieved an opening weekend gross of \$764,011, giving a reasonable screen average of \$3,411. Reviews ranged from scathing to ecstatic, but the film's total American gross was only \$1.5 million. The film will receive a British premiere at the Edinburgh Film Festival, but Warner Bros has yet to make a decision about whether or not to release it theatrically in Britain.

"I think in the end we weren't even speaking the same language. I began to feel like a fifth columnist or someone who had been parachuted behind enemy lines. It's a very strange experience to embark on a collaboration with people and then find you're in a battle with them. It doesn't really matter to me that 50 million Americans don't want to go and see my

film next Friday. I've never wanted that, but the thing about Warners and Hollywood is that the mind-set that prevails works from the assumption that if you're in the movie business, you want all those people to like your film, you want to win an Oscar and you want to have a \$100 million gross. That's what having a career in the industry means. Warners put up the money for the movie, God bless them, but there's a huge discrepancy between what a studio expects of a movie and what an eccentric film-maker like me expects. The notion that we could inhabit an idea together, let alone finish a film, is a miracle."

Whether Forsyth's experiences hold universal truths for European film-makers is a moot point. Certainly he harbours no desire to work for Hollywood again. "There are so few places to go for a mature film-maker like me. What are the choices if you have an ambitious idea? I could have made the film with CiBy 2000, but that would have meant doing without Robin Williams and I was committed to him by then. If there had been any area in Europe for someone like me, I wouldn't have contemplated going to America for the money. I wouldn't have been bedazzled by the fact that they were interested in the film and it would have been a better film, a more honest film and a less painful one. When I was deciding not to do *Rebecca's Daughters* I told Chris Sievernich that I wasn't sure if it was the kind of thing I wanted to get involved in at that point in my career. He said 'You're a European film-maker, you make films, you don't have a career.'"

Forsyth is currently in Glasgow and has no immediate plans to film again. "I think the people at Warners were so confounded by the film that they would probably have preferred it if it had just gone away and left them alone. Right now I'm very shy of it. I've forgotten all the subversive ambitions I had for it and I'm faced with the reality that most of the largest English-speaking audience in the world don't want to watch the movie. I can't help but take it personally."

"This has been a really tough experience and a rewarding one as well, but in many ways it doesn't matter to me if I never make another film. I don't say that as a reaction to a bad experience, but as part of an ongoing thought process. The only ambitions I have for the films I make is that they're appreciated as poetical works. Either film is too crude a medium to handle that or else I can't make it do these things. If something doesn't work over a period of time you tend not to be so interested in it. In a way my perception of film has been reduced." *'Being Human' will be shown at the Cameo at the Edinburgh Film Festival on 21 August at 8.30 pm*

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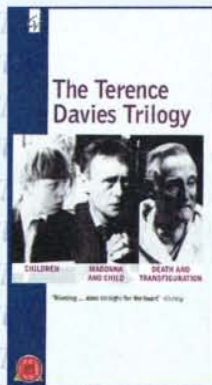
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A white flag?

Suppose the government's White Paper on the BBC had come out a year ago. Would it have looked any different? With one major exception, not at all. It has been clear, at least from the time of the publication of the Green Paper in November 1992, that the Tories had abandoned any plans they might once have had for radical changes in the scope or financing of the corporation. More than a year ago I wrote, "the Tory hidden agenda for the BBC now seems to be, with one or two touches to the tiller, 'Steady as she goes'." And so it has turned out.

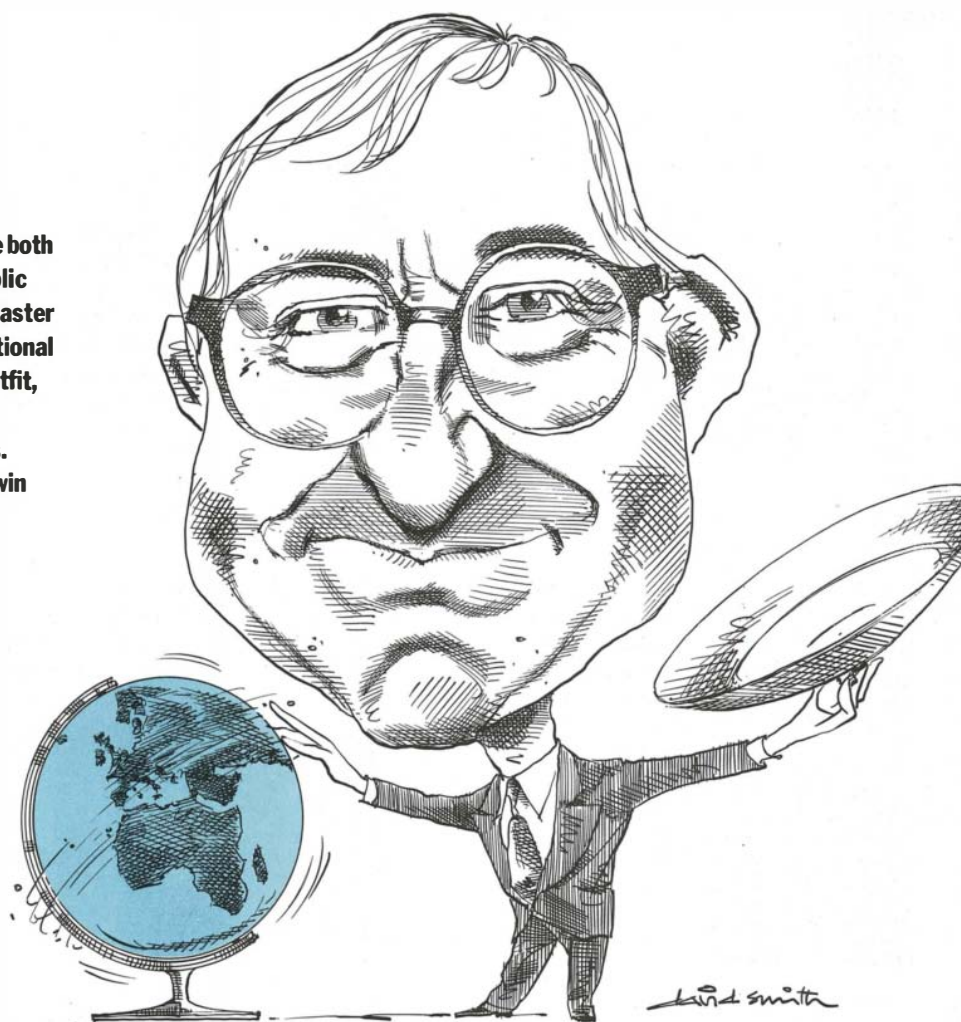
The interesting question is why? The quality broadsheets in the days following publication were unanimous – it was all down to "Birt's BBC revolution" (*Guardian*). "Birt triumphs in battle of the BBC" echoed the *Times*; "Birt's BBC given its reward" chorused the *Independent*; "Birt celebrates victory as BBC escapes intact", joined in the *Telegraph*. The chorus suggests that Birt has fought a canny battle to save Auntie, despite herself, from the hands of ruthless privatisers. But there are two problems with such a view.

First, Tory desire for a further round of broadcasting 'reform' wilted as it became apparent what a hash they were making of reforming the commercial side of British broadcasting, following the 1990 Broadcasting Act. Once amateur dabblers in broadcasting policy such as Margaret Thatcher, Nigel Lawson and Lord Young had left the political stage, it began to dawn on Tory minds that if you messed about too much with the BBC, then you would also further destabilise commercial broadcasting. If Birt is to be credited with beating the privatisers, then he has had a pretty easy battle.

Second, much of what broadsheet leaders like to portray as tactical cunning may more accurately be conceived of as servile compliance. Since the Tories appointed Marmaduke Hussey as chair of the BBC Governors at the end of 1986, a management regime progressively more in keeping with government policy has been instituted. There are fewer political rows between the BBC and the government simply because the BBC is more politically cautious. The changes that have and are being introduced by the Hussey-appointed regime are precisely the ones that the government has introduced throughout the public sector – internal markets, market testing, performance-related pay and so on. And in good 'can-do' style, the Hussey/Birt regime has scrupulously avoided embarrassing the government during the charter renewal debate. It has not even tentatively suggesting that public service broadcasting could do with some extra public money. Whatever "victory" Birt may be thought to have scored, it is certainly not one against the government.

The one important aspect of the White Paper that would not have been there a year ago is the emphasis on the BBC's role as a player in the international multi-media market. True, BBC World Service Television has been going since 1991 and its prospects were given a modest airing in the Green Paper and in the BBC's own *Extending Choice* published at the same time. But from the

Can the BBC be both a domestic public service broadcaster and an international commercial outfit, as the White Paper requires.
By Peter Goodwin



title page onwards, international commercial activities permeate the White Paper. In the subtitle, "competing world-wide" is on a par with "serving the nation".

In only the second paragraph, we are told that "new technologies are emerging and the boundaries between broadcasting, telecommunications, and other media are becoming blurred. New services are being created which combine aspects of different media, and which have become known as multi-media services. There will be new opportunities for United Kingdom business, in providing such multi-media services in an expanding global market. The Government believes the BBC should be able to evolve into an international, multi-media enterprise, building on its present commercial services for audiences in this country and overseas." Page after page of the White Paper continues the theme.

So what's wrong with that? The least of the problems is the one officially acknowledged by both government and corporation: the need to avoid subsidising commercial operations with public money. The BBC claims that it has cracked this one, and the government seems happy to go along with that claim. "Transparency" is the buzzword here – making absolutely clear what money is going where. In reality, the finances of the BBC's various operations are about as transparent to the outside world as a sand-filled goldfish bowl. And there are some powerful commercial rivals who are not going to let the BBC forget it.

But far more worrying are the less recognised issues arising from this new vision of BBC as multi-media world-beater. The BBC's international prospects are being mightily talked up. It is a harsh competitive world that the Corporation is entering. It is a

world in which most broadcasting is actually becoming more heavily national in content; a world with already well-established news channels; a world which is not simply sitting back waiting to watch the "best of British" (especially if English is not its first language); a world in which space on many cable networks is tight, cross-frontier advertising money hard to come by, and consumer spending on entertainment limited and hard fought-over. In short, the amount of money the BBC can make out of an international commercial strategy is modest, and seems in danger of being greatly exaggerated by patriotic cheerleaders.

In such circumstances there is the considerable danger of the BBC cutting corners and making editorial concessions to its international services that make good commercial sense but bad public service. It is hard, for instance, to see how World Service Television's new Arabic service can survive in partnership with Saudi princes, without trimming its editorial sails.

But suppose it does all come off and the international commercial operation begins to make money without editorial compromise? That's when the political problems would really begin. The White Paper studiously avoids any explicit commitment to maintaining the real value of the licence fee, and it signals the possibility of switching to a subscription scheme for the BBC after 2001. As the international commercially earned money starts to expand substantially, isn't the government going to say, "You see, you can stand on your own now – we will switch you from licence fee to subscription".

How soon before the tail of "competing world-wide" starts to wag the dog of "serving the nation"?

Catherine Deneuve Daniel Auteuil

Official
Selection
Cannes 1993

MA SAISON PRÉFÉRÉE

(MY FAVOURITE SEASON)

15

a film by ANDRÉ TESSIER with Catherine Deneuve, Daniel Auteuil, Gérard Mastroianni, Carmen Chaplin, Anthony Prada, Ingrid Caven
screenplay by Anne-Marie Collette and Pierre Gascar, music by Christophe Ysaac, a co-production LES FILMS ALAIN SARDE-THE FILMS PRODUCTION-DA FILMS
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Fever pitch

1978 proved to be a significant year for me in more ways than one. I was 12 years old. My parents finally got divorced after years of bickering and misery. My mother, sister and I returned home, to England, for a short holiday, and were proudly presented with monstrous Jubilee celebration necklaces by my grandparents. It was hard. We were obliged to pretend that the divorce wasn't happening in order to save the family from trauma. Yet against this strange backdrop of hypocrisy and side-taking, something truly wonderful occurred: 1978 was redeemed, I was redeemed, by *Saturday Night Fever*.

We had emigrated to Johannesburg, South Africa, when I was nine. They didn't have television there then, and I'd been weaned on it in England. Instead, we listened to the radio, day and night, and the only films I saw were at school, on Friday afternoons, when we paid a small sum to sit in the back row of the school's Bioscope and neck frantically with the boy of our choice while keeping half an ear on the soundtrack of films such as *The Cross and the Switchblade*.

I've always associated my father with the cinema. After the divorce, he had weekend custody and would arrive every Saturday night to take us to the Drive-in. Most nights we'd see three films in a row – anything with Goldie Hawn or Chevy Chase, anything with a bit of blood and gore: *Carrie*, *Halloween*, *The Omen*, *The Day of the Animals*, *Rosemary's Baby*. Always underage, my sister and I would lie on the back seat under a bundle of blankets so they wouldn't see us as we drove through the entrance. If we got bored during a feature, we'd clamber out of the car in our pyjamas and go and play on the swings and slides which were situated directly below the giant screen. We drank Coke and ate hot-dogs bought from the big cafés where all the customers seemed to be dressed in half-baked, sloppy-kneed night attire. Usually the soundtracks would be fuzzy – the speakers never worked – and we would try for ages to get my father to angle the car so that the rear-view mirror didn't obscure our view.

Of course, all the films were cut to ribbons. At that time the censor was king: South Africa was deep in a bizarre cultural puritanism so much in contrast with its rancid political set-up. On screen there was no nudity, no sex, no swearing, no significant violence, and in a way this has always left me with the feeling, cinematically and fictionally, that the idea of something is always more provocative and fascinating than the thing itself.

SNF was the first commercial piece of cinema I saw that didn't slot into an easy category in my mind. It wasn't horror, it wasn't a detective story, it wasn't a romantic comedy. It was real. Tony was real: his family, his life, his traumas, his torment. It was so gravelly and cheap and sordid. Every frame of the film was imbued with this feeling; it didn't matter what they cut or clipped, the feeling pervaded everything.

In 1978 I saw *SNF* three times: the first time, in a cinema; the second time, at a

Entranced by 'Saturday Night Fever' in a cinema, a drive-in and as an in-flight movie, novelist Nicola Barker reflects on John Travolta, dancing and the film's dream of escape

drive-in; the third time, on a plane. And each time, the film was transformed. On the plane, a British Airways flight, I turned to my mother and said, "But this is a different film! It's twice as long!" When I watch the unabridged version today, I find it hard to believe that there was anything left after the sex and swearing had been removed. I have been reliably informed that the version I saw in the cinema was absolutely incomprehensible. It was only about 45 minutes long, but I came out singing and dancing and didn't seem to notice that nothing matched up.

I fell in love with the cut version. I fell in love with the version in which I could see people's lips saying "fuck" but heard voices that sounded an expletive much less graphic. I liked the idea of a film in which things were happening that I couldn't quite grasp hold of; a little world which I wasn't seeing but that went on anyway. I'm truly shocked by the version I have now, which includes a graphic gangrape that was previously a scene merely of danger and the threat of violation.

I always associated *SNF* with England, not America: England, which was a place where I belonged, a place of calm and family, somewhere better and nicer, a place I yearned to return to. In the film, Tony wants to escape the place where he is a Face: Brooklyn, his gang, his family. In the end he does escape, he appears to escape, and I suppose that's part of the reason I loved the film. It was wish-fulfilment.

John Travolta – Tony – was my hero. I never fancied John, only felt that I should. Maybe I remembered him, in some distant recess of my brain, as that bastard in *Carrie*, a film that deeply shocked me. Much later, when I saw him in *Look Who's Talking*, I was stunned by his candle-wax skin, a bloated quality that was truly repulsive. I found

out that Travolta was a Christian Scientist. I couldn't marry this fact in my mind with the performance he had given: how could Tony care about religion? He was a Catholic, sure, in the same way as he was an Italian, but his only god was the future, his own future, and how he would forge it. I never felt that way. I couldn't see how I could break out of my own future.

And then there was the dancing. I was nutty about dancing, took a train on my own into Johannesburg twice a week and walked through the city to my dancing lessons. Dancing brought me my first whiff of independence. *SNF* was about dancing, which was great, but it also tapped into a strange fear I had at the time that when I finally got my dream and returned to England, I wouldn't be able to dance, or, more specifically, to fit in. Tony was the ultimate Face, the fitter-inner, but he was outside things too, he was contemptuous in his heart. That's how I felt, inside; that's how everyone feels, inside.

Recently I came across the short story 'Another Saturday Night' by Nik Cohn (1976) from which Norman Wexler scratched the screenplay for *SNF*. Now I keep waiting for Tony to turn into Nik Cohn's Vincent, a man who loves his mother and dreams about killing. Thank God Tony wasn't like that, because then he wouldn't have meant anything to me. But this film/story division shows how so much modern fiction and commercial cinema take one of two routes when faced with a classic hard-luck story: escape by leaving or escape by killing. By rights, Tony should have been a killer, but Wexler gave him hope where Nik Cohn didn't. Towards the end of the film, after Bobby's horrific fall from the Brooklyn Bridge, Tony tells a policeman, "There are ways of killing yourself without killing yourself." He wanted to escape, sure, but not that way.

Now when I watch *SNF* it reminds me of all the things I wanted to escape. At 12, *SNF* was the dream that helped me to get away from the place I was stuck in. Today, it reminds me of the anger, isolation, cynicism, confusion I felt at the time. I enjoy remembering those things. They thrill me.

I'll watch the first three minutes of *Saturday Night Fever* again and again, hearing 'Staying Alive' and watching Tony's feet as he walks through Brooklyn carrying a tin of paint, watching how he swings and strides, how he pesters female pedestrians, hustles his balls, eats pizza with his mouth open, checks out a new shirt in a shop window, his eyes blue and rheumy, the dimple in his chin like the black dot of an exclamation mark under the shock of his face. Tony strolls through Brooklyn like he owns it, and he does own it. I love his naiveté and his silliness.

Maybe I'll fast-forward, if I'm feeling adventurous, to the moment when he's asking his boss in the paintshop for an advance on his wages and his boss tells him to save for the future. Tony glares at him: "Fuck the future!" "No Tony," his boss says, grinning. "You can't fuck the future. The future fucks you."



Staying alive: John Travolta as Tony

Animal farm

Jenny Diski

Laughing Screaming:

Modern Hollywood Horror and Comedy

William Paul, Columbia University Press, £25, 510pp

Taking popular movies seriously has been the lifeblood of theoreticians in film departments throughout academia. Necessarily, since art movies – the cinematic equivalent of literature – are relatively few and far between. Unfortunately, even if popular texts are included, there is – film being a more recent invention than writing – an inverse ratio between the increase in numbers of hungry film postgraduates and the product they depend on for their livelihood. William Paul, Associate Professor of film at the University of Michigan, has done what anyone with a little ingenuity looking for a full professorship might have done: discovered a whole new genre to write up. *Laughing Screaming* is a 450-page analysis of 70s and 80s gross-out movies.

What, I hear those of you on this side of the pond murmur, is a gross-out movie? For the first half of the book, it is comedies such as *National Lampoon's Animal House*, *Porky's* and anything with Bill Murray in it which teenagers watch with relish, screaming "Oh, gross!" at the screen. (At least, that's apparently what they do in American malls; in Britain, even disaffected teenagers behave with more decorum in public places. I imagine that the Teddy Boys here ripping out cinema seats in the 50s to the sound of "Rock Around the Clock" apologised to the management for the mess.) Animal comedy, as Paul has christened his wayward young genre, tends to be about rivalry between fraternity houses in American colleges. This poses another problem for us British, who have little idea about the niceties of Alpha Beta Kappa versus Delta Pi.

Still, we can understand Bakhtin's idea of "grotesque realism" in Rabelais as quoted by Paul: "The essential principle... is degradation: the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract... It is the transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity." This, quite simply, along with Aristophanes' *The Birds* and *Lysistrata*, is the kind of oppositional structure we find when we examine such films as *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* and *Revenge of the Nerds*. Gross-out is saturnalia in the hands of the Lords of Misrule, the rejection by the "powerless underclasses" of

the domination of those who hold the reins of respectable social values.

Read the book and you're almost convinced by the argument. Watch the movies, and even my own representative of the dominated teenage underclass is left baffled by their limpness. Bad toilet and castration jokes, fancy cars getting dented, John Belushi spitting out his lunch over the bad, blonde guys – all this does not add up to the release of political energy needed to overthrow the status quo. To be fair, Paul does not claim that the movies are witty or well made, only that Bakhtin's exposition of Rabelais could be read into them. And this is true, up to a point – but it does not make you want to sit through them.

In the second half of the book, which is devoted to horror gross-out, Paul posits a link between scatological 'animal comedy' and the use of physical disgust in films such as *Night of the Living Dead*, *The Exorcist*, *Carrie* and *The Brood*. As he himself points out, the meanings of horror (suburban families disrupted by ghosts of their guilt, the destruction of humanity by forces of nature beyond our control) are more readily discernible. When he evokes the traditions of Oedipus, Frankenstein and Dr Jekyll, the effect is not so jarring as when Aristophanes is brought up in relation to Bill Murray movies. And the horror films themselves – as well as belonging to a recognised genre – are better products, on the whole, than the animal comedies. Even so, the most interesting examples he discusses – *The Shining*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Rosemary's Baby* – hardly support his thesis, depending as they do on fright and suggestion rather than physically foul depictions. Even *Nightmare* is more disturbing for its discourse on the terrors of sleep than for the burn-scarred Freddy, and Paul himself seems more concerned with this aspect than with Freddy's appearance.

He could be on to something, though, when he describes *The Book of Job* as the first work of gross-out. All those suppurating boils and weeping wounds – why has no one made a movie of it? It has God, the Devil, the comforters – a whole cast of unpleasant characters, and either of the first two would be a great part for Jack Nicholson.

Physical disgust is at the centre of the films of David Cronenberg – the grossest movie-maker of them all. *The Fly* embodies Paul's notion of the ambivalence we feel at the animality (in fact, the insectality) of our carnal selves, while the idea of 'letting it all hang out' realised as a monstrous mother with an external uterus in *The Brood* goes some way towards proving his point that there is a connection between the bodily excesses of animal comedy and horror. And Paul is to be applauded for his acute perception of Cronenberg's intention: this is literal hysteria, the Greeks' notion of the wandering womb as the cause of madness.

When he is not striving for significance in the wrong place, Paul does have a certain wit. The idea that animal comedy was a phenomenon of the Reagan/Thatcher decade, in that it idolises power and seeks to overturn whoever has it rather than dismantle the power structures themselves, is interesting. But his project of mapping the contours of a new genre would have been more successful had the theory been tied to films worth viewing. The Marx Brothers, yes; Bill Murray, not really.

Star reporters

Lorraine Gamman

Star Gazing:

Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship

Jackie Stacey, Routledge, £37.50 (hb), £12.99 (pb), 282pp

"Don't roll those Bette Davis eyes at me, young lady," said one post-war British father chastising his rebellious daughter, who had acquired ideas above her station from going to the cinema. By their own accounts, many women have gained similar inspiration from watching stars such as Davis, Joan Crawford, Rita Hayworth and Deanna Durbin. *Star Gazing* draws on questionnaires completed by female fans to create a rich and humane account of the ways in which going to the pictures helped many British women endure the post-war austerity years. Jackie Stacey's argues that emulation of ultra-feminine star personas from Doris Day to Marilyn Monroe does not necessarily equate with female subordination. On the contrary, the fantasies triggered by those glamorous Hollywood versions of femininity could empower women.

The idea is that there is more to desire for Carmen Miranda shoes with ankle straps or Deanna Durbin boleros than mindless consumption or simple conformity. Stacey's evidence suggests that such fashion symbols had more to do with liberating women to re-imagine themselves as an authoritative presence in post-war Britain. Yet in the last 20 years, psychoanalytic theories of spectatorship have rarely addressed, let alone answered, questions of female power. By focusing on actual women's memories of their lived experience rather than abstract concepts, Stacey is able to develop her ideas in three important directions. First, she explores the homoerotic dimensions of female spectatorship, challenging the idea of a dominant male gaze and passive women viewers. There are, she claims, forms of homoerotic pleasure in female-to-female identification which are still inadequately conceptualised.

Second, Stacey's research leads her to be extremely wary of universal statements. Why did one British woman claim she went to see Doris Day in *Calamity Jane* 45 times in a fortnight? And what made another fan insist that her love for Deanna Durbin would last a lifetime? Stacey never really gets to grips with the problems of memory and subjectivity inherent in reception studies, and some of her empirical evidence is questionable. Nevertheless, on the basis of this data she develops a cogent argument about the impossibility of reducing cinematic identification to a single activity, claiming that it is better conceived in terms of diversity, as a multiple psychic and cultural process.

Third, Stacey takes on board notions of consumerism and female spectatorship, turning round traditional arguments about commodity fetishism to suggest that the erotic dimension of the viewing process makes women active participants. She mobilises the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to support her argument that during the post-war period women developed specific "cultural competences" as a result of their avid film-going activities. According to Stacey, in the 40s and 50s ►

Letting it all hang out: Jeff Goldblum goes back to the womb in Cronenberg's 'The Fly', right
Power play: glamorous images of American stars such as Rita Hayworth, far right, inspired post-war British women





◀ female consumers of glamorous star images were not 'subjected' to monolithic ideological projects – they appropriated such images in their own interests.

Star Gazing's reassessment of ideas about female spectatorship is impressive, even if the book tends to spend too much time introducing theoretical concepts and connections rather than just stating them. It does not look at men as objects of the female gaze, nor at women as directors, but it does suggest new ways of investigating women's relationship to cinema. Stacey's work presents an eye-opening challenge to many of the theoretical impasses dogging feminist film history and is a must for media students – not least because such a wide range of feminist scholarship is analysed in a single tome.

China syndrome

Bin Zhao

From May Fourth to June Fourth:

Fiction and Film in Twentieth-Century China

Ellen Widmer and David Der-Wei Wang (eds), Harvard University Press, £39.95 (hb), £19.95 (pb), 435pp

The current focus of Western attention on China's impressive economic performance has tended to obscure cultural issues, so this anthology of essays on Chinese literature and cinema is welcome. The inclusion of two articles on film in a collection mainly about literature is suggestive. Traditionally literature, together with calligraphy and classical painting, has been the mainstay of Chinese high culture. It retains this position today, remaining a primary thematic source for cinema and other art forms. Film, on the other hand, was first introduced into China as a technical 'toy' and was regarded as an extension of live performance rather than an art form in its own right. The adaptation of literary texts into images and sound, known as *gaibian*, is generally a one-way process.

As its title implies, the anthology concentrates on two significant moments in Chinese history – the 1919 May 4th movement and the 4 June 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. In the intervening years, China went through violent social upheavals in its search for modernity, national unity and

Cultural revolutions:
Xie Jin's 'Hibiscus Town',
above, falls short of
literary sophistication,
while Chen Kaige's 'King
of the Children', below,
surpasses it

cultural rejuvenation. The literature and arts of this era turned away from aesthetic traditions and responded directly to social concerns. In the absence of an investigative social science, it was left to the arts to play a key role in providing social criticism. The periods considered here followed two epochs of relative tolerance – the two decades after the collapse of the last empire in 1911 and the ten years immediately before the June 4th massacre in 1989. The former has been put down to the lack of strong central government after the break-up of the old imperial order, while the latter has to do with the open atmosphere that resulted from the relaxed policies adopted by the reformist government in the 80s.

The essays on film come last in the book, apparently confirming cinema's second-class status, and little attempt is made to explore the connections between literature and film. The first article by Paul Pickowicz links post-Mao cinema to the May 4th tradition in film-making in the 30s and 40s. The May 4th movement, initiated and led by university students, was a response to the Treaty of Versailles' handing over Shandong Province to the Japanese instead of returning it to China, and is regarded as marking the beginning of contemporary China. Films in this tradition embraced the central tenets of the movement – nationalist opposition to imperialist aggression, support for democracy and the rejection of traditional Confucian values.

Pickowicz traces the May 4th tradition through two representative melodramas – Sun Yu's *Little Toys* (1933) and Tang Xiaodan's *Heavenly Dream* (1947) – to its revival in post-Mao China in Xie Jin's 1988 *Hibiscus Town*. He argues that compared with the more established May 4th tradition in literature, cinema falls short in terms of timing, subtlety and sophistication. It was not until the late 20s, more than a decade later than literature, that film started to turn away from providing popular entertainment towards dealing with issues such as class exploita-

tion, foreign invasion and urbanisation. The generic tendencies of melodrama, such as exaggeration, simplification and stereotypical representation have, claims Pickowicz, prevented cinema from achieving profound and aesthetically sophisticated analyses of social problems.

Even if we accept the thrust of Pickowicz's argument, his inflexible application of a Eurocentric history of melodrama to the Chinese context is questionable. It would have been more useful to relate Chinese cinematic melodrama to the indigenous traditions of opera rather than to trace it to French post-Revolutionary theatre. Similar problems beset Rey Chow's detailed analysis of Fifth Generation film-maker Chen Kaige's *King of the Children* (1988). While it may be true that this film goes much further than Ah Cheng's source novel, breaking the stranglehold of melodrama to produce a profoundly subversive critique of cultural reproduction and pedagogical violence, Chow's reliance on Freudian psychoanalysis, Althusserian Marxism and western feminism is often inappropriate. This is particularly marked in her account of the shortcomings of the film's attitude to gender, which draws heavily on the Freudian concept of narcissism. Though substantially reworked by Chow, this is not the best way to tackle the problem of gender in China, and it appears rather strained.

Western scholarship on Chinese cinema is still in its early stages and tends to be extremely partial, concentrating on award-winning films which have virtually no audience inside China. The question of the proliferating commercial popular cultures and their relationship to their western counterparts has scarcely been addressed. It is only through a multi-disciplinary enterprise which integrates textual analysis with social and historical analysis, and is sensitive to the difficulties of applying western theories to Chinese realities, that a viable and dynamic Chinese cultural studies can be forged.



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REVIEWS

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Appleseed

Japan 1988/91

Director: Kazuyoshi Katayama

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Manga Entertainment Ltd

Production Company

Gainax
In collaboration with AIC/Centre Studio
For Tohokushinsha/Bandai/Movic

Executive Producers

Shinnji Nakagawa
Hirohiko Sueyoshi
Yutaka Takahashi
English Version:
Laurence Guinness

Producers

Taro Maki
Atsushi Sugita
Masaki Sawanobori
Tohru Miura

Co-ordinator

Hiroshi Yamada

Production Manager

Shunichi Yamamoto

Casting

Jill Wilmot

Screenplay

Kazuyoshi Katayama

Original Story

Masamune Shirow

Seishinsha "Appleseed"

Script Adaptation

John Vols

Planning

Kimio Hayase

Character Design/

Animation Director

Yumiko Horasawa

Mechanic Animation

Director

Takahiro Kishida

Cells

Masaya Irahara

Akira Takeuchi

Yoshiharu Shimizu

Toshiko Baba

Miki Fujita

Jun Yano

Hironori Sugano

Yutaka Minowa

Takashi Hashimoto

Katsutoshi Tsunoda

Eiji Suganuma

Atsushi Takeuchi

Takahiro Kishida

Koichi Motoyama

Masahiro Ando

Keiichi Nakao

Kiichi Takaoka

Jun Okuda

Nobuyuki Ikegame

Hiroaki Aida

Hidetoshi Yoshida

Hideaki Matsuoka

Shinsuke Terasawa

Jiro Tanaka

Naoko Ozawa

Akihuro Izumi

Mechanic Supervisor

Hideaki Anno

Animation Checks

Tadao Miyamoto

Katsufumi Nagano

Kazuyuki Kuroiwa

Animators

Masashi Sakurami

Masashi Yanagishita

Toshimasa Kuwahara

Toshiya Watanabe

Takafumi Watanabe

Miho Saito

Yurie Sugihara

Chizuko Nakamura

Tomiko Tateyama

Tatsuya Kashima

Atsutaka Fukushima

Toshika Tanabe

Kunihiko Abe

Fumio Hiramura

Hiroyuki Horiuchi

Keiko Sakuma

Takuya Inuma

Johji Handa

Masahiko Ohuchi

Akira Oguro

Keiji Goto

Kohji Nagatani

Koichi Nakauchi

Yu Honda

Tatsuya Ando

Masahiro Okamura

Ashi Production

Studio Rod

Studio Emu

Studio Uonhaddo

Studio Ship

Studio Donguri

Nishiko Production

Studio Noa

Mushi Production

Mumin

Studio Look

Neomedia

Watanabe Production

Studio Random

Samutakku

Furumi

Rindaa Production

Big Ban

Kaname Production

Aubeck

Art Land

Toyo Doga

Dast

Colour Designations

Yukie Ishida

Cell Inspectors

Hiromi Anzai

Yurie Ohtsuki

Eri Nakamura

Kazumi Sakato

Takayuki Nishida

Hiromi Nishino

Koji Ohdana

Tracewoman

Hiroko Kochitani

Optical Processing

Preparation

Maki Pro

Sweetening

Toshimasa Yamazaki

Rotsuo Toyokawa

Satoshi Tsuchiya

Onari Tsuyusaki

Shuji Miyahara

Studio Mac

N Kon

Trans Arts

NVC

Watanabe Promotion

Dragon Pro

Studio Look

Art Land

Studio Bogi

Toyo Doga

Background

Toshiyuki Nishimura

Mitsuru Ishii

Chiyo Misawa

Kumiko Nagashima

Yukari Matsusawa

Tadashi Iwasa

Keiko Kaneko

Yoshihiro Sakamoto

(Atelier Fuka)

Tsutomu Nishikura

Atsushi Hichi

Katsumi Takao

Keiko Imamura

Hisea Ohmiya

Katsutoshi Aburai

(Studio Jack)

Tsutomu Ishigaki

Yukihiro Shibuya

Yoshinori Hirose

Masanore Kikuchi

Hiroshi Sasaki

Satoru Hirono

Filming Director

Masaaki Fujita

Filming

Hiroshi Isakawa

Norhide Kubota

Hideo Suzuki

Toshiaki Yamaguchi

Norihiko Sawada

Takashi Yamamoto

Kazunori Suzuki

(Mushi Production)

Studio Kyapaan

Big Ban

Aic Satsueibu

Editors

Shuichi Kakesu

Satoru Ishida

Eigo Makioka

Kakesu Henshushitsu

Art Director

Hiroaki Ogura

Effects

Shizuo Kurahashi

(Toyo Onkyo)

Special Effects

Toyohiko Sakakibara

(St Taito Magic)

Music

Norimasa Yamanaka

Music Selection

Seiji Suzuki

Songs

"Crystal Celebration"

by Masato, Norimasa

Yamanaka, performed

by Risa Yuuki

Audio Director

Yasumasa Date

Dubbing Director

Michael Bakewell

Dubbing Mixer

Richard King

Re-recording Engineer

Clive Mitchison

Voices

Larissa Murray

Dunan

Bill Roberts

Bularios

David Reynolds

Karon

Lorelei King

Athena

Vincent Marzello

Sebastian

Julia Brahms

Hitomi

6,390 feet

71 minutes

In colour

English version

In the wake of the Third World War, a new world order has arisen under the auspices of a Total Management Council. This new order centres on the experimental utopian city of Olympus, governed by Athena. Order is imposed by the Biodroids, a class of humanoids especially bred to thrive within the particular post-war conditions which exist. They, as the best adapted species, seek to extend their control at the expense of the rights of the cyborgs and a group of surviving humans whose experience of existence on the Badside renders them perpetually unstable.

Order is perpetually threatened by random acts of terrorism. A school is raided and the pupils held hostage. Young police woman Dunan and her cyborg buddy Bularios are constantly involved in the battle against these criminals, as is Karon, a young policeman subject to recurrent dreams about the suicide of his artist wife Fleia. Dunan requests transfer to the investigation bureau, the better to track down key terrorist A.J. Sebastian. However, Sebastian, as he makes plain in a television broadcast, sees himself not as a simple terrorist but as one who seeks to change the world. Further threat comes from the Biodroids, who aim to control the world through Gaia, Olympus' central DNA computer.

As Karon struggles to confront the lawless forces in society, he comes under investigation himself. Athena gives Dunan and Bularios instructions that, despite the criminal code, Sebastian is to be shot on sight. Disguised as Biodroids, Karon and Dunan fight off the massed advances of the Biodroids and other humanoids. Karon rescues Hitomi, a young prostitute who previously importuned him in a bar. Back in his high-rise apartment, Karon, his released canary having returned to its cage, muses on the distinction between safety and freedom.

Kazuyoshi Katayama's film is based upon the *Appleseed* stories of Masamune Shirow, which first appeared in 1985 and won a prize at the Japanese Science Fiction Convention. Shirow then went on to produce further tales in the series before pro-

ducing *Dominion Tank Police* and *Black Magic M-66*, the first of his stories to be filmed, and *Ghost in the Shell* (1989-90). A teacher, he is currently designing computer games.

There is much that is winning about the characters and narrative in Katayama's film, but sadly the rudimentary drawing and rather basic animation never manage to differentiate the various groups of antagonists sufficiently to engender much interest in, or indeed comprehension of, the various narrative twists. Consequently the film's interest lies in the undimmed 60s idealism of Shirow's story rather than in any palpable threat to its protagonists, and in its cannibalisation of a seemingly random collection of cross-cultural tropes and devices, *objets trouvés* whose meaning is constantly under threat of slippage.

Ultimately the film comes from the same seam as the work of Terayama or the early Oshima, in the sense that from the outset it allies itself to the marginal, unstable and neurotic – hence the opening section, in which the dreaming Karon recalls his wife's suicide. A.J. Sebastian himself exists as a kind of 60s talisman, the street-fighting man out to change the world, not destroy it.

But plot and character remain no more than a collection of randomly sorted givens raided variously from the police thriller (the scene with the gun when Dunan has only two bullets left and must fell the villain), classical mythology (Athena and Olympus – signs whose original and specific meaning has long since evaporated), science fiction ("I am a human being," Karon protests *Prisoner*-like, when the Biodroids access his memory) and popular culture (the battlefield at one point resembles the pitch during a game of American football). Everywhere there is the sense of meaning always on the point of meltdown, which lends the film a probably spurious surreal edge.

This is not just evident in the remarkable signs that litter the drawn landscape, insisting "Red Alert" at one point, or pointing to a blue line on a chart with the words "Tod Ritber". It is also seen in the relentless scatological dialogue that emerges without any sense of character differentiation between the protagonists – surely a loop taped from a *Terminator*-style Hollywood film? The repetitive slabs of all-purpose muzak have a similar effect.

This excess of distanciation has of course an interest of its own, foregrounding as it does a popular culture apparently existing on the very edge of terminal amnesia. But *Appleseed* is not really avant garde. Nor does it follow its initially announced intentions to their conclusions. These intentions, manifest in Shirow's story as it is rendered here, are both honourable and old-fashioned. Had greater edge been given to the drawing, it could have made quite another film. Instead it remains a merely diverting collection of cultural detritus.

Verina Glaessner

The Beverly Hillbillies

USA 1993

Director: Penelope Spheeris

Certificate
PG

Distributor
Twentieth Century Fox

Production Company
Twentieth Century Fox

Producers
Ian Bryce
Penelope Spheeris

Production Supervisor
Susan Robbins Newirth

Production Co-ordinator
Carolyn R. Hagan

Unit Production Manager
Ian Bryce

Location Managers
Kristan Wagner
Craig Pointes

Assistant Directors
Matt Earl Beesley
Ronnie Chong

Casting
Glenn Daniels
Associate:
Monty J. Goodson

Screenplay
Lawrence Konner
Mark Rosenthal

Screenplay Collaboration
Jim Fisher
Jim Staahl

Story
Lawrence Konner
Mark Rosenthal
Based on the television series created by Paul Henning

Script Supervisor
Karen Golden

Director of Photography
Robert Brinkman

Camera Operator
David Hennings

Steadicam Operators
Liz Ziegler
Jimmy Muro

Editor
Ross Albert

Production Designer
Peter Jamison

Art Director
Marjorie Stone
McShirley

Set Designers
Lawrence A. Hubbs
Evelyn Barbier

Set Decorator
Linda Spheeris

Production Illustrator
George Suhayda

Storyboard Artist
Janet Kusknick

Special Effects
Supervisor/Co-ordinator
Richard Zarro

Costume Design
Jami Burrows

Wardrobe Supervisor
Karen Bellamy

Make-up Supervisor
Brad Wilder

Hair Supervisor
Carol A. O'Connell

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Music Score
Lalo Schiffrin

Music Performed by
Acoustic Steel Guitar:
David Lindley

Orchestrations
Ira Hirshon

Music Supervisor
Stephen E. Smith

Music Editor
Steve McCroskey

Music Co-ordinator
Pamela Maderos

Songs/Music Extracts
"White Lightnin'" by J.P. Richardson, performed by Joe Diffie; "Ballad of Jed Clampett" by Paul Henning, performed

by Jerry Scoggins; "If You've Got The Money I've Got The Time" by Lefty Frizzell, Jim Beck, performed by Ricky Van Shelton; "Hot Rod Lincoln" by Charlie Ryan, W.S. Stevenson, performed by Jim Varney; "I Ain't Never" by Mel Tillis, Webb Pierce, performed by The Oak Ridge Boys; "Together Again" by Buck Owens, performed by Doug Supernaw; "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights" by Freddy Fender, Wayne Duncan, performed by Texas Tornados, Freddy Fender; "I'm Movin' On" by Hank Snow, performed by Sammy Kershaw; "Honey Don't" by Carl Lee Perkins, performed by Joe Walsh, Steve Earle; "Crying Time" by Buck Owens, performed by Lorie Morgan; "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" by Hank Williams, performed by (1) Aaron Tippin, (2) Hank Williams; "If You Ain't Got Love" by and performed by Dolly Parton; "Jeopardy Theme" by Merv Griffin; "Dueling Banjos" by Arthur Smith, performed by Eric Weissberg; "Barnaby Jones" by Jerry Goldsmith; "Rocky Mountain Way" by Joe Walsh, Joe Vitale, Ken Passarelli, Rocke Grace, performed by Joe Walsh

Sound Mixer
Thomas Causey

Sound Design
Harry Snodgrass

Supervising Sound Editors
Gary S. Gerlich
Gregory M. Gerlich

Sound Editors
Richard LeGrand Jnr.
William Jacobs
Andy Kopetzky
David Kulczycki
Hal Sanders
Mark Gordon
Teri E. Dorman

Supervising ADR Editor
Petra Bach

ADR Editors
S. A. Burrow
Zack Davis
Craig Dillenger
Robert Gustav Ulrich

ADR Mixer
Charleen Richards

ADR Recordist
Greg Steele

Re-recording Mixers
Steve Maslow
Gregg Landaker

Foley Artists
Dan O'Connell
Gary Hecker

Stunt Co-ordinator
Mike Cassidy

Animal Trainer
Cheryl Harris

Cast
Diedrich Bader
Jethro/Jethrine
Dabney Coleman
Mr Drysdale
Buddy Ebsen
Barnaby Jones
Erika Eleniak
Elly May
Zsa Zsa Gabor
Herself
Cloris Leachman
Granny
Dolly Parton
Herself
Rob Schneider
Tyler
Lea Thompson
Laura
Lily Tomlin
Miss Hathaway
Jim Varney
Jed Clampett
Linda Carlson
Aunt Pearl
Penny Fuller
Margaret Drysdale
Kevin Connolly
Morgan Drysdale
Lyman Ward
Chief Gallo
Leann Hunley
Miss Arlington
Ernie Lively
Briggs
David L. Crowley
Danforth
Mike Cassidy
Waters
David Byrd
Mr. Mackey
Patrick Cranshaw
Reverend Mason
Eric "Sparky" Edwards
Fat Elmer
Mickey Jones
Spittin' Sam
Robert Easton
Mayor Amos Jasper
Don McNatt
Billy Bob
James Scmid
Derek
Brandon R. Morgan
Jake
Charlie Heath
Lance
James O' Sullivan
Coach
Annalee Spheeris
Girl in Car
Amy Golden
Girl in Bathroom

Eddie De Harp
Guard at Wedding
John Ashker
Guy in Jeep
Tony Duenas
Gang Member
Nina Beesley
Clampett Maid
Ronan O'Casey
Man at Party
Gary Cervantes
Carlos
Gregory Wallace
Male Nurse
Sid Newman
Gabe
Taylor Gilbert
Martti Muller
Women at Party
Shawn Modrell
Flight Attendant
Gordon Ross
Hank
Carmen Filpi
Frank
Dorene Baker
Leslie Cook
JerreDye
Anushka Jones
BirJonns
Stan Mazin
Charles McGowan
Lisa Montgomery
Michael B. Moynahan
Michael Norris
Randi Pareira
Joan Pierce
Beverly Polcyn
Marcia A. Rice
Victoria Stevens
John W. Woodruff
Dancers
DickCunico
Skip Fesselmeier
Archie Francis
George Foster
Lisa Haley
George Highfill
Brantley Kearns
Jack Lowell
Vern Monnett
Bobby Reeves
Musicians
Barbara "Babs" Friedkin
Chaille Hamilton Percival
Backup Singers

8,403 feet
93 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Deluxe

Accidentally discovering oil on his property, Arkansas backwoodsman Jed Clampett instantly becomes a billionaire and moves to Beverly Hills. There he hopes to find a suitable new wife who will raise his tomboy daughter Elly May to be a real lady. Along with Jed and Elly May come Granny, and Elly May's cousin Jethro. Banker Milburn Drysdale eases the Clampetts into society by buying them a mansion, ordering his son Morgan to look after Elly May in high school, detailing assistant Jane Hathaway to trouble-shoot and giving the lunk-



Hicksville: 'The Beverly Hillbillies'

headed Jethro a job as Vice-President.

Although Miss Hathaway originally mistakes the family for intruders, Jed trusts her and lets her take charge of the search for a wife. At school, Elly May helps Morgan out by humiliating the head bully by flattening him in a fight. Tyler, Drysdale's unscrupulous employee, schemes to get hold of the Clampett billions by passing off his girlfriend Laura as a French teacher. Entering the Clampett home to tutor Elly May, she sets out to woo the unworldly Jed. Granny catches on to the scheme just as the wedding is announced, and is packed off by the villains to an oppressive old people's home. As Clampett relations flock to California for the wedding, Miss Hathaway consults private eye Barnaby Jones, who tracks Granny to the home. Miss Hathaway and Granny invade the ceremony in time to expose Laura and Tyler. In lieu of a wedding, Jed decides to throw a party.

As mainstream Penelope Spheeris, *The Beverly Hillbillies* follows *Wayne's World* as an adaptation of a 60s TV sitcom, but it flounders in the wake of the *Addams Family* movies. Under any circumstances, it's a disaster which strains harder for fewer laughs than any non-Blake Edwards comedy in recent memory. The level of wit on display can be grasped from Laura's 'Allo! 'Allo! French accent, whereby the expression "happiness is hard to find" comes out as "a penis is 'ard to find".

Jim Varney, toning down the obnoxiousness of his 'Ernest' character, is reasonably cast, and room is even found for Buddy Ebsen, the original Jed, by writing in a cameo for his other TV persona, geriatric 'tec Barnaby Jones (his age cruelly emphasised under the end credits in an out-take of him mugging a simple line). However, the Clampetts - except for the annoying Diedrich Bader as Jethro and his twin sister - get relatively little screen time, leaving the bulk of the humiliation to Lily Tomlin, who looks alarmingly like Leonard Nimoy in a wig, as the fumbling Miss Hathaway.

Pared down as if a merciless preview had decreed the removal of all excess footage (Elly May's high school sub-plot is especially perfunctory), this still hasn't got a single decent gag, and strains especially with a shot of the White House as 'Cousin Bill' searches for his missing invite to the Clampett wedding. Penelope Spheeris herself, heard briefly forgiving the cast for fouling up in the desperate blooper clips that end the film, is worlds away from her earlier careers. A trace element of her usual concern for music minutiae at least ensures that the classic "Ballad of Jed Clampett" is played mercifully straight, rather than replaced, *Addams Family* style, with a rap. However, the tune-in-next-week optimism of the closing lyric ("You're all invited back again to this locality to have a heapin' helpin' of the hospitality") seems misplaced - this is highly unlikely to be rewarded with a sequel.

Kim Newman

Cible émouvante (Wild Target)

France 1993

Director: Pierre Salvadori

Certificate
15

Distributor
Gala

Production Company
Les Films Pelléas/
Locofilms

Producer
Philippe Martin

Co-producer
Gérard Louvin

Production Supervisor
Patrice Arrat

Production Manager
Lydia Setton

Assistant Directors
Marie-Jeanne Pascal

Casting
Françoise Lebeau

Screenplay
Pierre Salvadori

Continuity
Hélène Sébillotte

Director of Photography
Gilles Henry

Camera Operator
Thierry Jault

Editor
Hélène Viard

Art Director
Yann Arlaud

Costume Design
Valérie Pozzo di Borgo

Make-up
Paul le Marinel

Hairstylist
Jean-Pierre Berroyer

Music
Philippe Eidel

Sound Recordist
Nicolas Naegelien

Sound Editor
Boris Viard

Sound Re-recordist
Paul Bertault

Cast
Jean Rochefort
Victor Meynard
Marie Trintignant
Renée
Guillaume Depardieu
Antoine
Patachou
Madame Meynard
Charlie Nelson
Dremyan
Wladimir Yordanoff
Casa Bianca
Serge Riaboukine
Manu
Philippe Girard
Tony
Daniel Laloux
Expert
Christophe Odent
Girard
Olga Poliakoff
Old Lady
François Toumarkine
Butcher
Julien Cafaro
Cheese Seller
Patrick Zard
Receptionist
Thierry Balcon
Night Watchman
Philippe Harel
Barnabe
Jacques Monnet
Painter
Jean-Noël Fenwick
Diamond Merchant
Guy Reboul
Antoine Parenti
Ours Paul Bertolucci
Corsican Singers

7,934 feet
88 minutes

In colour
Subtitles

Paris. Victor Meynard, a professional killer, carries out a hit, but as he leaves he is disturbed by a delivery boy. Spontaneously, Victor offers to take on the young man, Antoine, as his apprentice. A young woman, Renée, sells a painting to a gangster for nearly a million francs, claiming it has been stolen from a museum. After she leaves, it turns out to be a freshly-painted fake. Victor is hired to assassinate her.

Victor and Antoine follow Renée and discover she is a compulsive thief. Victor attempts a hit when Renée stops to steal some clothes at a second-hand shop, but he accidentally shoots a bystander instead. That night, Victor and Antoine stake out Renée at a sleazy hotel. Victor decides to kill her the next morning, but cannot bring himself to. He visits his mother in an old people's home. She tells him that she brought him up to be an assassin and that his father (also a hitman) would have been ashamed of him.

Victor tries to kill Renée again, this time in an underground car park. Instead he kills the gangsters who have come to check up on him. Renée asks Victor for protection and he agrees. They check into an expensive hotel, but it turns out to be owned by the gangster, who realises that Victor ►



Uncertain years: Jean Rochefort

◀ has double-crossed him and so hires rival hitman Hector Dremyan.

Realising who owns the hotel, Victor, Antoine and Renée beat a hasty retreat. Victor takes Renée to his country residence and gives her his mother's old room. She phones her friend Girard, a gallery owner in Paris, who agrees to help her escape. Victor admits to Antoine that he has been confused since meeting Renée, and decides to end this confusion by killing her after all. But before he can do anything, Renée knocks on the door of his room and tells him she cannot sleep. He remedies this by giving her a foot massage. While Renée is asleep, Victor's mother tries to stab her.

The next morning, Renée goes into Victor's bedroom, where she finds his gun and a collection of newspaper clippings about his assassinations. She is scared and runs off to Paris only to find that Girard has been killed by Dremyan. He kidnaps Renée and forces her to tell him where Victor is. Renée takes the assassins to Victor. Dremyan agrees to spare Antoine if Victor shoots Renée. Victor's mother intervenes and in the ensuing confusion, Dremyan's gun goes off in his face. Victor and Renée declare their love for each other and get married.

● One of the first shots in *Wild Target* is a close-up of the hero introducing himself to camera: "I am Victor Meynard. I am 55 years old. I am a professional killer." The joke is that he says these words in English, which he is learning from a Linguaphone cassette. Why he is doing this is never quite made clear. It is just part of a fastidious perfectionism which also leads him to label the tins of food in his country hideout by the day on which he will eat them. For English, read Puritan. The only time that we see Victor practising his English again is when Renée escapes to Paris after finding out that her guardian is a hitman. He is in love with her and realises that he is at risk of becoming a sad old man. For home study read self-abuse.

Wild Target is a comic *policier* in the tradition of Truffaut's *Baisers Volés*. The guileless young apprentice hitman is even called Antoine, like the Jean-

Pierre Léaud character who is learning to be a private detective in Truffaut's film. Two and a half decades later, the formula has worn rather thin. Truffaut brought the moral universe of the American thriller to French cinema in order to ridicule the Parisian bourgeois values he despised. In *Wild Target*, what might once have been social comment has become self-parody.

Once you have grasped the idea that the hitman is the moral centre of the film, everything else about *Wild Target* is very predictable. As soon as you see Victor, the dutiful son, take his mother a present of a parrot (the pet previously belonged to one of his hits), you know that the next time you see the old woman she will have killed the poor beast. When you see Renée shoplifting, you know Victor will disapprove and yet be unavoidably attracted to the young waif.

The acting is perfectly good. Jean Rochefort, familiar to British audiences from Patrice Leconte's films *The Hairdresser's Husband* and *Tango*, is suitably oddball as Victor; Guillaume Depardieu is likeable as Antoine; and Marie Trintignant plays the hard-to-get act as only French actresses know how. But we have met these characters a hundred times before.

An institution of French TV is the late-night screening of classic films, *Cinéma de minuit*. Over the years, French audiences have feasted on seasons of neo-realism, westerns and, indeed, Truffaut. But recently, *Cinéma de minuit* has been rivalled by the soft porn of the new commercial channels. In the most sophisticated of these, the various hackneyed scenes of housewives' confessions and rooftop voyeurism are interspersed with the comments of a creepy man of uncertain years who is lounging on a sofa in his grubby Y-fronts watching the show. Despite its nods in the direction of the New Wave, the tired knowingness of *Wild Target* has more to do with this kind of show than with the cinema classics showing on the other side. The thought that all the sexually voracious young Renée has been waiting for is an ageing anal-retentive like Victor comes straight from this same comic-book universe.

Martin Bright

Fixing the Shadow

USA 1992

Director: Larry Ferguson

Certificate 18	Hairstylist Gina Homan
Distributor Columbia TriStar	Titles/Opticals Pacific Title
Production Company Polar Entertainment In association with Capitol Films	Music Cory Lerios John D'Andrea
Executive Producers Ronna B. Wallace Richard N. Gladstein	Music Supervisor Bones Howe
Co-executive Producer Joe Caracciolo Jr	Music Editor Abby Treloggen
Producers John Fielder Mark Tarlov	Songs/Music Extracts "Working On It", "The Road To Hell" by and performed by Chris Rea; "We Can't Stop The Fire" by Cory Lerios, Pamela Phillips Oland, Bob Marlette, performed by Cory Lerios; "Hell's Kitchen" by David Clarke, Julius Ulrich; "Soul Survive" by Danny Clarke, performed by Asphalt Ballet; "Roll On Truckers" by Otha Young, performed by Juice Newton & Silver Spur; "Push and Shove" by Diamondback, Bob Marlette, performed by Diamondback; "Body Bags" by Jason Bieler, Matt Kramer, Phil Varone, performed by Saigon Kick; "Sillusion" by Rob Vino, performed by Dying Breed; "Broken Arrow" by and performed by Robbie Robertson
Production Supervisor Shell Hecht	Sound Design John Nutt
Production Co-ordinator Zibby Miles	Supervising Sound Editor Patrick Dodd
Unit Production Manager Margaret Hilliard	Sound Editors Francesca Dodd Richard Quinn Linda Kay Brown Mary Works
Location Manager Pinki Ragan	ADR Editor Joan Chapman
Post-production Supervisor Tia Lemke	Sound Mixer Jon 'Earl' Stein
Assistant Directors John Vohlers James D. Deck Scott K. Coder Gregg Singer	Sound Re-recorders Mark Berger David Parker
Casting Louis Digiaimo	Sound Effects Editor Christopher Beaver
Screenplay Larry Ferguson	Technical Adviser Dan Black
Script Supervisor Brenda Wachel	Stunt Co-ordinator Steve Davison
Director of Photography Robert Stevens	
Camera Operator Allen Easton	
Special Photography Effects Greg Gorman	
Special Visual Effects Editors Michael Schorr Robert C. Jones Don Brochu	
Associate Editor Doug Boyd	
Production Designer James L. Schoppe	
Set Decorator Marcia Calosio	
Draughtsman John Westfall	
Storyboard Artist David Negron	
Costume Design Ileane Meltzer	
Wardrobe Supervisor Yvette Walsh	
Make-up David L. Anderson	

Cast
Charlie Sheen
 Dan Saxon
Linda Fiorentino
 Renee Jackson
Michael Madsen
 Blood
Courtney B. Vance
 Conroy Prince
Leon Rippy
 Virgil
Dennis Burkley
 Oatmeal
Lyndsay Riddell
 Marybette
Rino Thunder
 Bogus Charlie
Rip Torn
 Prescott
James Oscar Lee
 Highside
Ed Adams
 Dirt
Hollie Chamberlain
 Stephanie
Richard Madsen
 Buster
Larry Ferguson
 Kelly
Ted Parks
 Sidewinder
Michael Waltman
 Jailer
Rick Waln
 Gas Attendant
John Schuer
 Motorcycle Cop
Tom Moga
 Tom Evans
Brian Law
 Crying Child
Andy Hill
 Treasury Agent
Michael Berry
 Bulldozer Driver
Ralph Rivera
 ATF Officer
Bob Williams
 DEA Agent
Scott Johnson
 Trooper

John D. Sarvis
 Helicopter Pilot
Steve Chambers
 Clyde
Gregory G. Ferris
 John Rogers
 DEA Agents
Brenda Phillips
 Bubbles
Joey Sagal
 Talco Artist
Russ St. John
 Karu Mosca
Keith Mosca
 Drug Dealers

9,093 feet
101 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
 Technicolor

● Arizona cop Danny Saxon is fired because of his unorthodox methods in ending a violent situation involving a Native American, who tells him an ancient legend that seems to accord with his regular nightmares. Saxon is quickly recruited by the FBI as a deep cover agent, infiltrating a biker gang who are involved in drug and guns smuggling.

With the help of a bike mechanic he meets in a bar, Saxon learns the habits and customs of the biker community which enables his imposture to work successfully. He is quickly accepted, and forms a close relationship with photo-journalist Renee Jackson, who is on an assignment to cover biker life.



Hog tied: Charlie Sheen, Michael Madsen

He also forms, less comfortably, a close relationship with gang leader Blood, which heralds the start of Saxon's increasing seduction by the bikers' unconventional lifestyle.

Battling with his FBI controller, whose plans put his identity at risk, Saxon is forced to face his deep-buried memories as well as his own capacity for violence. It is only when Blood wants to induct him into an elite biker squad called the Jackals that Saxon is awakened to the moral contradictions involved. When the gang hold up an all-night drug store, the cash till attendant is shot dead. Saxon realises he has no stomach for the Jackals' casual violence, and wholeheartedly throws himself into organising the FBI's long-planned bust. It proves successful, and Saxon is finally able to exorcise his demons.

There is nothing very appealing in Larry Ferguson's clumsily-fashioned biker exploitation movie, unless you count the spectacle of Charlie Sheen sporting a beard, zipping himself into carefully-dirtied leathers, and riding the freeways of Arizona aboard a home-made hog. He clearly wants to look like a cross between Dennis Hopper and Kris Kristofferson, but *Easy Rider* this isn't. If Hollywood is about to go through a new love affair with Hell's Angels, then it will have to come up with more coherent expositions of non-conformity than *Fixing The Shadow* can provide.

Marrying psycho-trauma motivations (the Sheen character was abused by his violent cop father), and tepid mythic reference (the title refers to a story told by a Native American at the start of the film), the routinely-drawn narrative attempts to describe an instinctively moral man strangely attracted to the potential for violence he finds inside himself. Counter-balancing this need is another, for all the affection denied him in a loveless childhood. This is provided by photo-journalist Renee Jackson (Linda Fiorentino, whose capacity for rapacious eroticism is much better served in John Dahl's *The Last Seduction*). He even beats up a pair of poolroom red-necks just to impress her.

But it is Saxon's relationship with chief hood Blood that is the most troubling and ambiguous. Blood, whose portrayal by Michael Madsen is an even more ridiculous example of silver-screen posing than Sheen's, is apparently dynamic, attractive, and the possessor of a skewed kind of honour. But when he guns down the attendant in an all-night grocery store, Sheen can launch into an glossily photographed speech about chasing the dream in America – which provides, with breathtaking hypocrisy, the final moral rejection of the biker creed. This is not a completely bad movie – there is the odd firework – but the lazy acting of the male principals and some diabolically crude dialogue take it to depths where even Sheen's trash aspirations can't help it.

Andrew Pulver

The Flintstones

USA 1994

Director: Brian Levant

Certificate

U

Distributor

UIP

Production Companies

Universal City Studios/Amblin Entertainment/Hanna-Barbera

Executive Producers

David Kirschner
Gerald R. Molen
William Hanna
Joseph Barbera
Kathleen Kennedy

Producer

Bruce Cohen

Co-producer

Colin Wilson

Production Supervisor

William Plant

Production Office

Angela Heald

Unit Production Manager

Paul Deason

Location Manager

Allen Tinkley

Post-production Supervisor

Michelle Fandetti

Casting

Nancy Naylor

Voice:

Mickie McGowan

Assistant Directors

Marty P. Ewing
Dana Kuznetzkoff
Susan Pickett

Screenplay

Tom S. Parker

Jim Jennewein

Steven E. de Souza

Based on the animated series by Hanna-Barbera Productions

Script Supervisor

Annette Haywood-Carter

Director of Photography

Dean Cundey

Camera Operators

Raymond Stella

Additional:

Casey Hotchkiss

Kriss Krosskove

Special Visual Effects

Industrial Light & Magic

Producer:

Judith Weaver

Computer Graphics

Supervisor:

Alex Seiden

Art Director:

Tyriben Ellingson

CG Animation

Supervisors:

James Satoru Straus

Eric Armstrong

Editor:

Michael Gleason

Scanning Supervisor:

Joshua Pines

Optical Supervisor:

Bruce Vecchitto

Co-ordinator:

Vicki Engel

Executive in Charge of Production:

Patricia Blau

Executive in Charge of Production Operations:

Jeff Mann

Executive in Charge of Digital Production:

Thomas A. Williams

Computer Graphics

Animators:

Dave Andrews

Geoff Campbell

Kyle Balda

Steve Price

Computer Graphics

Artists:

Bijan Forutanpour

Christophe Hery

Thomas L. Hutchinson

Patrick T. Myers

Carl N. Frederick

David Horsley

Joe Letteri

Kevin Rafferty

CG Software Developers:

Eric Enderton

Dan Goldman

Digital Artists:

Jon Alexander

Sandy Houston

Sandra Ford Karpman

Tom Rosseter

Carolyn Ensle Rendu

Barbara Brennan

Peg Hunter

Greg Maloney

Rebecca Petrucci-Heskes

CG Camera

Matchmoves:

Charlie Clavadetscher

Peter Daulton

Scanning Operators:

Randall K. Bean

George Gambetta

Mike Ellis

John Whisnant

Concept Designer:

Erik Tiemens

Supervising Model

Maker:

Barbara Affonso

Chief Model Makers:

Brian Gernand

Tony Sommers

Model Scenic Painter:

Susan Ross

Model Makers:

Harold Weed

Michael Lynch

Scott McNamara

Eben Stromquist

John Goodson

Richard Miller

Nelson Kirby Hall

Giovanni Donovan

Camera Operator:

Pat Sweeney

Optical Camera

Operator:

James C. Lim

Optical Line-Up:

Jennifer Lee

Tim Geideman

Kristen Trattner

Optical/Scanning

Co-ordinator:

Lisa Vaughn

CG Department

Production Manager:

Gail Currey

Senior Manager Digital

Operations:

Douglas Scott Kay

CG Department

Operations Manager:

John Andrew Berton Jr

Computer Graphics

Co-ordinator:

Nancy Jill Luckoff

Editorial Co-ordinator:

David Tanaka

Model Department

Manager:

Jeffrey Olson

Model Department

Co-ordinator:

Mark Anderson

Visual Effects Supervisor

Mark Dippe

Editor

Kent Beyda

On-Line Editor

Richard Hiltzik

Production Designer

William Sandell

Art Directors

Jim Teegarden

Nancy Patton

Christopher Burian-

Mohr

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Caroline Quinn

Creative Supervisor

Jamie Courtier

Set Design

Paul Sonski

Elizabeth Lapp

Erin Kemp

Set Decorator

Rosemary Brandenburg

Set Dressers

Jim Meehan

Mark Weissenfluh

Nicholas Parker

Edward J. McCarthy III

Robert Greenfield

Jonathan Bobbitt

Production Illustrators

Marty Kline

Tim Flattery

Props:

Paul Power

Scenic Artist

Jay Fisher

Storyboard Artist

David Lowery

Sculpting Foreman

Jean Cherie

Sculptors

Chief:

Yarek Alfer

Fred Arbogast

Anthony Centonze

Michael Hill

Michael LeVitre

Michelle Millay

Tom Prosser

Len J. Ricci

R. Wayne Strong

Paul Bivens

Paul Feyerabend

William Kauffman

Thomas Meikle

Thomas Pottage

Carlos A. Revilla

Christoph Rittershausen

Special Effects Supervisor

Michael Lantieri

Special Effects

Steven Bunyea

Cory Faucher

Louie Lantieri

Matthew J. McDonnell

Jon Porter

Bill Shourt

Tom Tokunaga

Kim Derry

Erik Haraldsted

Tim Moran

Daniel Ossello

E. Wayne Rabouin

Brian Tipton

Foreman:

Donald R. Elliott

Shop Foreman:

Tom Pakk

Animatronic Creatures

Jim Henson's Creature

Shop:

Supervisor:

John Stephenson

Principal Designers:

Kevin O'Boyle

Nigel Booth

Sculptors:

Nigel Booth

John Cormican

Chris Fitzgerald

Graham High

Ivan Manzella

Kevin O'Boyle

Colin Shulver

Mark Coulter

Carol De Jong

Alix Harwood

Jeremy Hunt

Lindsay McGowan

Gary Pollard

Barry Sutton

Engineering Supervisor:

Geoff Paige

Mechanical Design

Supervisors:

Verner Greysty (Bronto)

Chris Barton (Dino)

Electronics Supervisor:

Quentin Plant

Creature Control

Design:

Dave Housman

Hair and Feathers:

Vicky Stockwell

Kate Studley

Sue Oakes

Val Jones

Tacy Kneale

Foam Supervisors:

Mike Osborn



Critically slated: John Goodman

◀ Just as he is about to be roped up, Wilma appears on the scene with Fred's office Dictabird, which tells the mob about Vandercave's scheming.

Vandercave, meanwhile, has kidnapped the Flintstones' daughter Pebbles and the Rubbles' adopted son Bamm-Bamm, and refuses to release them unless he is given the Dictabird. Fred and Barney meet him in the quarry and hand the bird over. Vandercave tries to double-cross them, leaving the children to be bludgeoned to death in the quarry machinery. Fred improvises a catapult to rescue them; in the process, he sets off a landslide and accidentally invents concrete. The company boss, Mr. Slate, is so delighted that he offers Fred another executive position. Fred turns it down, asking only that he and his colleagues be reinstated in their old jobs.

As you might expect of a film that made \$37.5 million on the weekend it opened in the USA, *The Flintstones* is by no means as bad as certain critics ("Yabba-Dabba-Don't") have suggested. It is held together by a bravura, chest-thumping central performance from John Goodman as Fred, and boasts the usual stunning chicanery from Industrial Light and Magic, who fast seem to be collapsing the boundaries between live-action and animation. Given that most of ILM's recent work has been done on 'boy's own' sci-fi pics like *The Abyss* and *The Terminator*, or, most famously, *Jurassic Park*, it is interesting to see the computer wizards in action on a comedy. The array of eccentric animals conjured up by the Jim Henson Creature Shop – among them, a swill-guzzling pegasaurus, a lobster lawnmower and a fussy, pedantic Dictabird – is also intriguing, even if the cutesy anthropomorphism wears after a while.

Given the sophistication of the puppetry and special effects, it is perhaps a surprise that the script should be quite so threadbare and witless. There were reputedly 32 writers involved in cobbling together the screenplay. Director Brian Levant organised mass round-table sessions where the hacks fired off gags at each other in the grand tradition of much American TV writing. Unfortunately, nearly all their jokes land, on stony ground. The Bedrock news is relayed by CNN (Cave News Network), the man who invented the wheel is called Firestone, there are references to the great intellectual Albert Einstone, the local drive-in cinema is showing the new Gorge Lucas film *Tar*

Wars, and a certain producer/director is credited as Steven Spielrock. As if this not-so-wise-cracking were not enough, the production and costume designers also chip in with a welter of visual puns, fashioning stone-age bowling alleys, stone-age, foot-powered automobiles, stone-age office toys and stone-age shopping malls. It is little wonder that the narrative is all but submerged in the landslide of rocky humour and detail. The plot, which involves Fred becoming a yuppie executive and treating his old pal Barney with contempt, might have been borrowed wholesale from *The Simpsons*. Whatever the case, it is hardly enough to sustain a 20-minute Hanna-Barbara cartoon, let alone a 90-minute feature. This is not necessarily a problem, though. Like other recent examples of 'sitcom cinema', such as *The Beverly Hillbillies* or *The Addams Family*, *The Flintstones* is predicated on the familiarity of the characters. There is no need for them to change or develop because, it is assumed, the audience already knows them inside out. The storyline is not of major importance in its own right; rather, it works to draw a series of self-contained sequences together in a semblance of unity.

Levant is, by all accounts, a die-hard *Flintstones* fan. His film may come replete with all the old songs and catchphrases, but in some ways this is not an especially faithful adaptation of the cartoons. It is much darker in tone than its source material: however cuddly all the animals seem, one knows that it would only take a little digital fiddling to transform them into blood-thirsty, human-chomping monsters. Goodman, as bluff, genial Fred, still carries a hint of that menace the Coens unearthed so skilfully in *Barton Fink*. And Liz Taylor, dusting down her star persona after an absence of 15 years from the screen, doesn't fit at all comfortably into the all-American stone-age family the series used to celebrate. As Wilma's brash, blowzy mother, the aptly named Pearl Slaghoople, she looks as if she might have stumbled out of the nearest Edward Albee or Tennessee Williams play. Rosie O'Donnell, Elizabeth Perkins and Rick Moranis are more successful in capturing the ingenuous, one-dimensional quality of their cartoon characters, and all give likeable performances, blending soap-style naturalism with gentle caricature: they're ordinary, blue-collar Americans who just happen to live in the year 2,000,000 B.C.

As former animator Frank Tashlin showed in his Jerry Lewis films, it is quite possible to make a live-action comedy with all the anarchic crackle of a *Tom and Jerry* cartoon. Unfortunately, *The Flintstones* is so overloaded with laboured visual and verbal gags and in-jokes, so keen to display its own attractions (many of them sure to spawn tie-in toys) and so short on narrative drive, that it seldom takes wing. This is theme-park film-making, at once torpid and energetic, but singularly bereft of a sense of direction.

Geoffrey Macnab

Fortress

USA/Australia 1992

Director: Stuart Gordon

Certificate
15

Distributor
Columbia TriStar
Production Companies
Fortress Films/Village
Roadshow Pictures/
Davis Entertainment
Production

Executive Producers
Graham Burke
Greg Coote

Producers
John Davis
John Flock

Executive in Charge of Production
Doug Yellin

Co-Producers
Neal Nordlinger
Michael Lake

Line Producer
Irene Dobson

Production Co-ordinator
Sharon Miller

Unit Manager
Neville Mason

Location Manager
Brian Burgess

Casting Directors
Australia:
Maura Faye Assoc

US:
Mike Fenton

Assistant Directors
Charles Rotherham
Nikki Long

Screenplay
Steve Feinberg
Troy Neighbors

Screenplay Collaboration
Terry Curtis Fox

Continuity
Sophie Fabbri Jackson

Director of Photography
David Egby

Camera/Steadicam Operator
Philip M. Cross

Editor
Timothy Wellburn

Production Designer
David Copping

Art Director
Daan Wajon

Art Department Co-ordinator
Rosslyn Albernethy

Scenic Artist
Michael Chorney

Storyboard Artists
USA:
Tim Borgard

David Russell
Chris Buchinsky

Special Effects Supervisors
Australia:
Tad Pride

USA:
Paul Gentry

Special Effects
Arthur Spinks Jnr
Kent Miklenda

Special Effects Consultant
Robbie Blalack

Mechanical Effects
David Pride

Pyrotechnics
Alan Maxwell

Costume Design
Terry Ryan

Costume Supervisors
Phil Engles
Peter Bevan

Costume Armourer
Phillip Moritz

Make-up/Hair Supervisor
Karla O'Keefe

Make-up Artist
Margaret Archman

Prosthetics
Bob Clark

Supervising Music Editor
Virginia Ellsworth

Music Editor
Bill Black

Music Supervisor
Barry Levine

Songs/Music Extracts
"Die Kunst der Fuge
BWV 1080",
"Contrapunctus 3 &
11a4", "Canon for
Augmentation in
Contrario Motu", by
Johann Sebastian Bach,
performed by Bell'Arte
Ensemble

Supervising Sound Editor
Robert Mackston

Sound Recordists
Paul Clark
Richard Gooch

ADR Recordist
Alan Bond

Foley Recordist
Nerses Gezalyn

Dolby Stereo Consultant
Steve F.B. Smith

Re-recording Mixers
Matthew Iadarola
Gary Gegan

ADRMixers
Charleen Richards
Brad Brock

Foley Mixer
Jim Ashwill

Supervising Foley Artist
Dan O'Connell

Foley Artists
Alicia Stevenson
Hilde Hodges

Christopher Moriana
Sound Effects Editor
Alan Howarth

Jason King
Lance Brown

Paul Menichini
George Nemzer

Tim Gedemer
John Chalfont

Anne Laing
Burke Green

Randy Hornaker
Visual Consultant
Simon Murton

Cast
Christopher Lambert

John Brennick
Kurtwood Smith

Prison Director Poe
Loryn Locklin

Karen Brennick
Lincoln Kilpatrick

Abraham
Clifton Gonzalez Gonzalez

Nino
Jeffrey Combs

D-Day
Tom Towles

Stiggs
E. Briant Wells

Friendly Border Guard
Vernon Wells

Maddox
Denni Gordon

Lydia
Alan Zitner

Camper
Peter Marshall

Travel Agent
Dragica Debert

Bio Scanner Guard
Troy Hunter

Border Guard
Harry Nurmi

Border Guard
Peter Lamb

Border Guard
Michael Simpson

Medical Trustee
Heidi Stein

Pregnant Woman
Josephine MacKenroth

Woman Prisoner
Nancy Grande

Woman Prisoner
Tracy Martin

Woman Prisoner
8,535 feet

95 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour

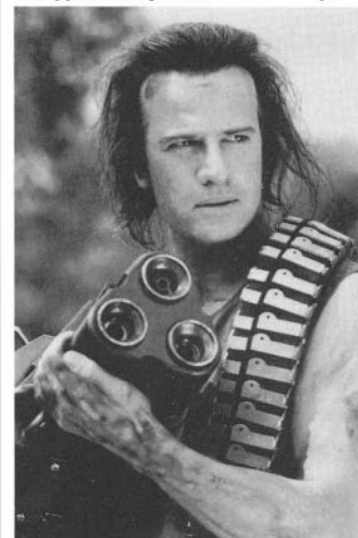
The USA, the not too distant future. To curb over-population, a law has been passed that no woman shall give birth to more than one child. Former Black Beret captain John Brennick and his wife Karen, pregnant for the second time after the loss of their first child, are caught trying to cross the border. She escapes, but he is sentenced to 31 years in the Fortress, a 30-storey maximum security prison built underground and run by a private corporation, Men-Tel.

On arrival, each man is forcibly implanted with an intestinator, a device which automatically triggers unbearable pain if its host crosses a yellow line, and causes the stomach to explode if he crosses a red line. A surveillance machine monitors the men's dreams and relays them on video to the offices of prison director Poe, who punishes them if they have pleasurable thoughts.

Brennick is assigned a cell with Nino Gomez, an impulsive kid; Stiggs, a nervous boffin; D-Day, a nasty thug; and Abraham, a wise old prisoner who acts as Poe's personal valet. Brennick soon learns that Karen has been captured as well. He makes enemies with Maddox, the joint's resident tough guy, and is forced to fight him, to Poe's voyeuristic amusement. When Poe orders him to execute Maddox, Brennick refuses and stands by helplessly while the computer blasts a hole through Maddox's stomach. He does, however, retrieve Maddox's intestinator, which he slips to Gomez.

Poe, smitten with Karen, orders Brennick to be electronically lobotomised, but offers to stop torturing him if Karen will become his consort. She accepts, and Brennick, now a vegetable, is returned to his cell. The now heavily pregnant Karen discovers that Poe is an 'enhanced' human being who doesn't eat or sleep, and can't have sex. Plying him with champagne, she is able to access Brennick's dreams through the computer and restore his sense of self.

Re-established, Brennick plans an escape. Stiggs discovers a way of removing the intestinators, and Abraham smuggles a map back from Poe's quar-



In the belly of the beast: Christopher Lambert

ters. As they break out, pursued by androids and killer robots, D-Day is killed, while Poe murders Abraham and sends Karen to have a lethal Caesarean. Poe is caught in crossfire and explodes. Stiggs is shot, but manages to corrupt the security computer before he dies. As the prisoners stage a mass break-out, Brennick, Karen and Gomez escape across the Mexican border. As Karen goes into labour, the truck comes alive and mows Gomez down. But Karen and the baby are unharmed and the family is reunited.

So paranoia is in: *Fortress* is only the most recent of futuristic prison movies sent to warn us that we are becoming a society under surveillance. While it is true that you can't go for a day's shopping any more without being caught on video camera, the fantasies of total intrusion posited by such movies are so hysterical that they end up having, at best, no more than a kitsch appeal to anyone over 12.

The current formula was established five years ago by John Hillcoat's *Ghosts... of the Civil Dead* – prisoners are stripped of their civil rights and held in facilities owned by faceless corporations which are accountable to no-one. The conspiracy theory prison is run with a kind of institutionalised sadism that either allows a Darwinian *laissez faire* policy where the inmates duke it out among themselves (as in the rather entertaining Ray Liotta vehicle *No Escape*) or attempts utter domination – as in this film, where the prisoners' very thoughts are invaded.

The twist provided by both *Fortress* and *No Escape* is the introduction of the invincible ex-army hero (a direct descendant of Kurt Russell's eyepatch-wearing Snake Plissken in John Carpenter's *Escape From New York*), the only man, as it happens, who can take on the system single-handedly. Whatever a 'Black Beret' may be, Christopher Lambert, here sporting the regulation unwise action man haircut, is that man – which means that he is strong, silent (which, in Lambert's case, is a good idea) and handy with a machine gun.

While this is strictly routine material, there is no excuse for it to be turned into a film as laughable as *Fortress* without even being funny. It is just about possible that the director, Stuart Gordon – who in happier days made the gleefully ghoulish *Re-Animator* – was flummoxed by a script that appears to have been written by a pair of computer nerds who haven't seen daylight since 1975. But Gordon doesn't even try – he lets the film look as though it is taking place in a hangar, and laboriously pulls the plot strings with no suspense, no humour, and a few derisory special effects lifted from *Alien*. *Fortress* is so shabby, it makes *No Escape* look like *Apocalypse Now*, and with its bizarre fixation on the stomach – pregnancy, exploding bellies, crippling intestinators – might leave an audience feeling somewhat nauseated.

Caren Myers

Getting Even With Dad

USA 1994

Director: Howard Deutch

Certificate

PG

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

Executive Producer

Richard Hashimoto

Producers

Katie Jacobs

Pierce Gardner

Associate Producers

Tom S. Parker

Jim Jennewein

Elena Spiotta

Production Co-ordinator

Lisa A. Becker

Unit Production Manager

Richard Hashimoto

Location Manager

Bruce Devan

2nd Unit Director

Jack Gill

Assistant Directors

K. C. Colwell

Cynthia A. Potthast

Michael Kahn

Molly M. Mayeux

Carol Bawer

2nd Unit:

John S. Engel

Roe Sharon

Casting

Richard Pagano

Sharon Bialy

Debi Manwiller

Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Tom S. Parker

Jim Jennewein

Script Supervisor

Pamela Alch

Director of Photography

Tim Suhrstedt

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Peter Deming

Camera Operator

G. Michael Santy

Steadicam Operator

Chris Haarhoff

Editor

Richard Halsey

Co-Editor

Colleen Halsey

Production Designer

Virginia L. Randolph

Art Director

Clayton R. Hartley

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Christina Marie

Randolph

Set Design

Edward L. Rubin

Set Decorator

Barbara Munch

Set Dresser

Don Weinger

Set Designer

Edward L. Rubin

Storyboard Artist

Janet Kusnick

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Chuck Gaspar

Special Effects Foreman

John McLeod

Special Effects

Robert P. Clot

Costume Design

Rudy Dillon

Costume Supervisor

Eileen Mae Sieff

Make-up

John M. Elliott Jr

Ronnie Specter

Make-up Effects Created & Designed

Kevin C. Yagher

Make-up Effects Crew

Mark C. Yagher

Shaun Smith

Key Hairstylists

Barbara Lorenz

Charlotte Gravenor

Title Design

R.E.D. Production

Titles

Cinema Research

Corporation

Opticals

Pacific Title

Music

Miles Goodman

Orchestrations

Oscar Castro-Neves

Music Supervisor

Bob Badami

Music Editor

Nancy Fogarty

Songs

"Money (That's What I

Want)" by Berry Gordy,

Janie Bradford,

performed by Barrett

Strong; "Montego Bay"

by Bobby Bloom, Jeff

Barry, performed

by The Bar-Kays; "Start

Me Up" by Keith

Richards, Mick Jagger,

performed by The

Rolling Stones; "Do

You Love Me" by Berry

Gordy, performed

by The Contours;

"Ball the Wall" by

Henry Roeland Byrd,

performed by Professor

Longhair; "You Can't

Get There From Here",

"I Found Faith" by

and performed by

AJ. Croce; "Weight

of the World" by Brian

O'Doherty, Fred Valez,

performed by Ringo

Starr; "Blues Ain't

Nothin'" by and

performed by Taj

Mahal; "I Need Money

(Keep You Alibis)"

by James Moore,

performed by Slim

Harpo; "Happy

Birthday" by Mildred

J. Hill, Patti S. Hill

Choreography

Michelle Johnston

Supervising Sound Editors

Bill Phillips

John Phillips

Production Sound

Recorder

Agamemnon

Andrianos

Supervising ADR Editor

Bill Phillips

ADR Editor

Mary Ruth Smith

Foley Editor

Andy Kopetzky

Dubbing Recordist

J. Allen Hurd

ADR Mixers

David Boulton

Christina Tucker

Foley Mixer

David Gertz

Re-recording Mixers

John Reitz

Mel Metcalfe

Gregg Rudloff

Sound Effects Editors

Hal Sanders

Pieter Hubbard

Jimmy Ling

Adam Johnston

Steven Ramirez

Foley Artists

James Moriana

Jeffrey Wilhoit

Music Recordist/Mixer

Joel Moss

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jack Gill

Cast

Macaulay Culkin

Timmy Gleason

Ted Danson

Ray Gleason

Glenne Headly

Theresa

Saul Rubinek

Bobby

Gailard Sartain

Carl

Sam McMurray

Alex

Hector Elizondo

Lieutenant Romayko

Sydney Walker

Mr Wankmueller

Kathleen Wilhoite

Kitty

Dann Florek

Wayne

Ron Canada

Zinn

Ralph Peduto

Chapman

Bert Kinyon

Melvin Thompson

Guards

Danny Hunter

Armoured Car Driver

Suzanne Lime

Secretary at Elevator

Mary Diltz

TV Reporter

Scott Beach

Wino

Wil Albert

Docent

David Kagen

Little League Coach

Dick Bright

Father at Golf Course

Barbara Scott

Dog-walking Mother

Seth Smith

Boy in Bathroom

Roland T. Abasolo

Vendor

A.C. Griffing

Richard Koldewyn

Barrett Lindsay Steiner

Italian Waiters

Barbara Oliver

Nun

Charles Dean

Policeman at Church

Nick Scoggins

Scary Prisoner

Heather Bostian

Chatty Woman

Pamela Khoury

Woman on Subway

Sam Horigan

Boy on Subway

Cheryl Lee

Leggy Blonde

Jarion Monroe

Ticket Seller

Joe Lerer

Bus Driver

Karen Kahn

TV Anchorwoman

Susan Hopper

Waitress at Lunch

Counter

9,797 feet

109 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Deluxe

San Francisco. Ray Gleason, a small-time crook, plans one last heist. He intends to steal a consignment of valuable old coins, sell the hoard to a gangster contact, and use his share of the proceeds to buy his own bakery store. Shortly before the robbery is due to take place, Ray's sister Kitty turns up at his apartment. While he was away in jail, she looked after his son, Timmy. Now she is about to go on honeymoon with her new husband, and needs to leave the boy in San Francisco for a week.

The robbery goes ahead as planned. However, Timmy eavesdrops as Ray and his accomplices, Bobby and Carl, conceal the coins on the roof. He is left at home when they go out to celebrate. Exasperated at being ignored by his father, he hides the money himself and refuses to give it back until Ray meets his demands. For the next few

days, he insists on being pampered – taken out to ball games and fun fairs, to ice skate, play crazy golf and visit aquariums.

Gradually, Ray and Timmy rebuild their relationship. The boy sends Bobby and Carl off on a wild goose chase by dropping a few false clues, and is

◀ smug effort, but ends up costing Culkin dear. Rather than steal scenes from the adults (the usual prerogative of the child actor), he has them plucked from under his own nose instead. Danson's character, petulant, vain and not a little dim – he has just served a prison sentence for stealing a haul of Betamax VCRs – is infinitely more likeable than that of his manipulative, do-gooding son.

Getting Even With Dad may tout itself as a paean to family values, but the marked shortage of female characters suggests it is more a variation on the buddy movie. At times, given their differences in age, Culkin and Danson make a very odd couple indeed. Although there are token attempts at providing Danson with a girlfriend (and hence Culkin with a surrogate mother), Glenna Headly's character, dowdy detective Theresa, plays a relatively insignificant part in the story. Presumably, developing her role further would have meant shifting the focus away from Culkin. As he was paid in excess of £5 million for appearing, this wasn't a risk the scriptwriters could comfortably take. Instead, the relationship between father and son is foregrounded throughout, and with sometimes bizarre consequences. The film's finale, where Danson chases after and stops a bus to prevent Culkin leaving him, may be a cliché of romantic drama, but is slightly jarring when a middle-aged man and his 12-year old kid are the parties concerned.

Howard Deutch directs in brisk fashion. The occasional moments of severe mawkishness (for instance, Culkin staring plaintively at a photograph of himself by his mother's grave) are counterpointed with chases (in one scene, which seems to be borrowed wholesale from *The French Connection*, Culkin is pursued across the subway, darting in and out of trains and up and down escalators as he goes) and splurts of slapstick comedy. These are largely provided by Saul Rubinek and Gailard Sartain as Danson's little and large stooges, but are strained and only fitfully funny.

Danson is more effective. It's hardly his most taxing role. As the feckless father and two-bit thief, he still seems to be playing a certain Boston bartender, but at least he does so with the usual quota of smug charm. Given that the storyline demands Culkin be taken on trips to every conceivable San Francisco tourist attraction, it's little wonder that watching the picture sometimes seems akin to looking at a stranger's holiday snaps.

There's a certain irony to the title, if not to the film as a whole. Getting even with Dad is something many Hollywood executives have been wanting to do ever since Culkin's success in *Home Alone* gave his father and business manager, Kit, such leverage with the studios. What they need is for Mac to have a series of clunking failures. This moralistic, saccharine fable, which sees the young star at his most self-satisfied, may just be one of them.

Geoffrey Macnab

The Innocent

United Kingdom/Germany 1993

Director: John Schlesinger

Certificate 15
Distributor Entertainment
Production Companies Lakehart (UK)/ Sievernich Film (Germany)
In association with The Berlin Film Board
The Brandenburg Film Board
North Rhine Westfalia Film Board
Executive Producer Ann Dubinet
Producers Norma Heyman
Chris Sievernich
Wieland Schultz-Keil
Line Producer Ingrid Windisch
Production Co-ordinator Karin C. Miller
Production Manager Barbara von Wrangell
Unit Production Manager Günther Russ
Location Manager Barbara von Wrangell
Post-production Co-ordinator Alison Odell
Casting Noel Davis
Jeremy Zimmerman
USA: Emily Schweber
Berlin: Renate Landkammer
Assistant Directors David Tringham
Stefan Diepenbrock
Sebastian Fahr
Screenplay Ian McEwan
Based on his novel
Script Supervisor Diana Dill
Director of Photography Dietrich Lohmann
Steadicam Operators Klemens Becker
Michael R. Clausen
Jörg Widmer
Editor Richard Marden
Production Designer Luciana Arrighi
Art Director Dieter Döhl
Set Decorator Olaf Schiefner
Special Effects Adolf Wojtinek
Costume Design Ingrid Zoré
Make-up/Hair Design: Christine Beveridge
Chief: Joan Hills
Title Design Plume Partners
Music Gerald Gouriet
Music Director/Conductor William Kidd
End Title Music Performed by Susan Bickley
Songs/Music Extracts "Maybellene" by Chuck Berry, Russ Fratto, Alan Freed, performed by Chuck Berry; "Adelheid" by Wieland Schultz-Keil, Gerald Gouriet, performed by Nick Curtis; "Too Darn Hot" by Cole Porter; "Shake Rattle 'n' Roll" by C. Calhoun; "Glaube Mir" by Gerhard Winkler, Fred Bauchi; "Oh Mein Papa" by Paul Burroughs, John Turner, Geoffrey

Parsons; "Piano Etude" by and performed by Anthony Hopkins
Choreography Eleanor Fazon
Sound Design Paul Rabjohns
Supervising Sound Editor Nick Stevenson
Dialogue Editor John Foyner
ADR Editor Anthony Message
Sound Mixer Axel Arft
Dubbing Mixer Gerry Humphreys
Technical Advisers Anthony Bowen
Anthony Le Tissier
Steven Rabourn

Cast
Anthony Hopkins
Bob Glass
Isabella Rossellini
Maria
Campbell Scott
Leonard Marnham
Hart Bochner
Russell
Ronald Nitschke
Otto
James Grant
MacNamee
Jeremy Sinden
Captain Lofting
Richard Durden
Black
Corey Johnson
Lou
Richard Good
Piper
Lena Lessing
Jenny
Dana Golembek
Charlotte
Susanne Jansen
Mairmaid Singer
Christine Gerlach
Woman with Dog
Ludger Pistor
German Informer
Meret Becker
Ulrike
Christiane Flegel
Frau Eckdorf
Klaus-Jürgen Steinmann
Herr Eckdorf
Jessica Cardinahl
Franziska Brix
Forest Ashley Knight
Maria's Children
Matthew Burton
Flight Officer
Rupert Chetwynd
Air Commodore
Martin Becker
Natascha Bub
Offenders at Police Station
Hans Martin Stier
Helmut Bernhoffen
Gerch Hofmann
Police Inspectors
Friedrich Solms-Baruth
Hotel Receptionist
Martin Höner
Left Luggage Officer
Vera Ziegler
Jürgen Wink
Helga Petersen
Olaf Meden
Melitta Moritz
Gundula Damerow
Maria's Neighbours
Stefan Taufelder
East German Checkpoint
Hubertus Brand
Peter Meseck
East German Border Guards

Mark Valley
Ian Rowles
Robert Lively
Hans Diederich
J. L. Hooper
Harvey Friedman
Nigel Scotting
Steven Moorecraft
Kevin Davenport
Chris Potter
Tunnel Technicians

Jeff Seyfried
John Scott
Tony Estese
Kelly Cole
Arnold Strong
US Guards

10,670 feet
119 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Eastman colour

German title:
...und der Himmel steht still

As the Berlin Wall is torn down in 1989, ageing businessman Leonard Marnham returns to the city at the invitation of Maria, the woman he loved and lost there during the Cold War. He recalls that when he first came to Berlin in 1955, he was a telephone engineer recruited to assist a British-American operation. Assigned to work under American officer Bob Glass, he gradually learns about Operation Gold: the CIA and MI6 secretly run a tunnel under the Russian sector in order to tap into Soviet telephone lines, recording coded calls for analysis in London and Washington. Obsessed with security, Glass strictly supervises Leonard's activities, watching with concern as the young man becomes involved with Maria, a girl he meets at the Resi Dance Hall. In turn, Leonard is instructed by MacNamee, his British superior, to spy on Glass to ensure that all information about Operation Gold is shared.

Infatuated with Maria, Leonard clumsily spoils their passionate relationship by becoming violent one night. Maria runs away, and Glass promptly takes her in for questioning; cleared by his security team, she later returns to Leonard on the run from her former husband Otto, who has beaten her up. Although horrified at this revelation, Leonard is ecstatic at their reunion; Maria introduces him to her parents and relatives, and soon they announce their engagement party. The celebrations are gatecrashed by Leonard's downstairs neighbour, Geoffrey Black, who appears mysteriously well-informed about all the guests. Afterwards, Leonard and Maria find Otto waiting for them: he will only sign Maria's divorce papers in return for cash and full details of Operation

Gold. There is a fierce struggle, and Otto is killed.

Leonard collects two equipment cases from his office, and he and Maria fill these with Otto's dismembered corpse. Struggling to dump the cases, Leonard runs into Black and explains that they contain decoding equipment; back in his own apartment, Black makes a hasty phone call in Russian. As a result, no sooner has Leonard, with immense difficulty, deposited the cases in the tunnel than Operation Gold is uncovered by Soviet troops and the cases are handed over to the West German police. Throwing herself into Glass' embrace, Maria persuades him to arrange for Leonard to be flown immediately out of Berlin to escape trial for murder. At the airport, at the last minute, she tells Leonard he must leave without her, and only now, when at last they meet again, does Leonard realise that this was an act not of betrayal but of self-sacrifice. Among the crowds cheering the destruction of the wall, Leonard and Maria look forward to life together.

In adapting his novel, set in 1987, for the screen, Ian McEwan has created the film's opening and closing sequences from what was the book's postscript, timeslipped a scant but significant two years forward. As a result, the fall of the Berlin Wall becomes the vantage point for a story told in flashback, and the relationship between Leonard and Maria is paralleled by two significant episodes in Cold War history. What began as an affair of tunnelings, misapprehensions and concealments survives to celebrate the removal of a final symbolic obstacle to peace. In the novel, the sundered couple remain apart at the end, their potential reconciliation unconfirmed.

In both versions, McEwan cheats on his characters. The 30-year separation in which Maria sensibly gets on with her life, possessing all the facts and coming to terms with them, while Leonard remains gloomily frozen in a condition of ignorance and emotional impairment, is singularly unconvincing. The truth of the matter, despite McEwan's careful scene-setting, is that neither tunnel nor wall actually has much bearing on the lovers' basic



Severed relations: Isabella Rossellini

problem: it is the intrusive Otto and his demise, rudely and somewhat puzzlingly spiked on a cobbler's last, that causes all the damage. Fascinated by technical detail, McEwan writes of environment, espionage and dismemberment with the same intricacy; on the page, there is no question that the segmentation of Otto will haunt the lovers for many years. But on screen, dissection has evidently been judged less easy to enact than a few glimpses of blood-splashed faces gasping for air, and the film's emphasis has been unhelpfully shifted.

Firstly, the killing itself, an ugly and rather ludicrous outburst of fast cutting and orchestral hysteria, abruptly destroys the urbanity of mood (Schlesinger's earlier scenes of the rivalries surrounding Operation Gold evoke the seediness of *An Englishman Abroad*), only to leave a bizarre irrationality in its place. More extendedly, the challenge of hiding Otto's remains, a series of encounters in which the corpse seems perpetually on the point of discovery by kids, dogs, railwaymen and armed sentries, has a Hitchcockian humour which confirms the implicit silliness of Leonard's previous brushes with authority and the comical awkwardness of the youth himself. Most crucially, the shared revulsion with which, in the book, the lovers try to conceal their crime, is lost: instead, the burden is largely shouldered by Leonard, while Maria slips too easily into the guise of self-serving betrayer.

The result of the failure of their on-screen relationship to gel is that the big farewell scene at the airport, its echoes of *Casablanca* enhanced by Isabella Rossellini's striking resemblance to her mother Ingrid Bergman, enjoys little prospect of being taken seriously, while the jump forward into a profusion of grey hair and wrinkles carries no weight at all. Schlesinger, though unable to resist the usual clichés whenever he encounters a spiral staircase, directs with restraint and keeps to a minimum flourishes like the serpentine opening shot that encompasses a babble of reporters in the hotel lobby. For what it's worth, the monumental dullness of post-war Berlin comes over loud and clear – an ominous grey labyrinth of tension and exhaustion in which only the Resi Dance Hall retains vestiges of tinsel vivacity.

Anthony Hopkins as Bob Glass creates a solid performance from an underwritten sketch; extraordinarily, he manages with a single tear to provide the revelation, slightly fumbled by McEwan, that the story's true romance lies elsewhere, in Glass' unrequited love for Maria. In the thankless role of the ingenuous Leonard, Campbell Scott is unable to substantiate the behaviour that McEwan, too, has been unable to render plausible – the sudden stupidity of his attempt to rape Maria. With this one dislocation, for all the absurd authenticity of the Operation Gold fiasco itself, the fiction that McEwan has constructed becomes unreliable and nonsensical.

Philip Strick

Kickboxer III: The Art of War

USA 1994

Director: Rick King

Certificate
18

Distributor

Columbia TriStar

Production Company

Kings Road

Entertainment/MPC

Executive Producer

Luciana Boal-Marinho

Producer

Michael Pariser

Associate Producer

Kinga Kozoron

Production Co-ordinators

Cristina Berio

Mariza Figueiredo

Production Manager

Caique Martins

Ferreira

Location Manager

Fernando Serzedelo

Assistant Directors

Vincente Amorim

Luiz Henrique Fonseca

Casting

Mary Jo Slater

Screenplay

Dennis Pratt

Script Supervisor

Kate Lewis

Director of Photography

Edgar Moura

Camera Operator

Alexandre Fonseca

Steadicam Operator

Marcos Avellar

Special Visual Effects

Richard Lee Thompson

Editor

Daniel Loewenthal

Production Designer

Clovis Bueno

Art Director

Toni Vanzolini

Set Dressers

Nena Alvarenga

Monica Rochlin

Teko

Costume Design

Isabela Braga

Wardrobe Supervisor

Bia Salgado

Make-up

Jaquie Monteiro

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

Harry Manfredini

Orchestrations

Bobby Muzingo

Music Supervisor

David Franco

Songs/Music Extracts

"Casa de Samba"

performed by Bando

do Carnaval; "X UX U"

by Ricardo Lemmers,

performed by Ricardo

Lemmers and Group;

"Verao" by Bruna

Lopes, performed by

Danca E Balanca; "Lua

Crescente" by Marcelo

Duarte, performed

by Danca E Balanca;

"Video Clip" by

Leonardo Teixeira,

performed by Banda

Bell

ADR Editor

Debbie Melford

Josh Schneider

Foley Editors

Derek Marcell

Beau Maxwell

Zane Bruce

Joe Sabella

Sound Recordist

Lee Orloff

Utility Sound

Paulo Ricardo Nunes

Stunt Co-ordinator

Webster Whinery

Martial Arts Instructor

Shuki Ron

Cast

Sasha Mitchell

David

Dennis Chan

Xian

Richard Comar

Lane

Noah Verdusco

Marcos

Alethea Miranda

Isabella

Milton Gonçalves

Sargeant

Ricardo Petraglia

Alberto

Gracindo Junior

Pete

Miguel Ormiga

Marcelo

Leonor Gottlieb

Margarida

Renato Coutinho

Branco

Kate Lyra

Branco's wife

Ian Jacklin

Martine

Manitu Felipe

Machado

Shuki Ron

Reinaldo

Bernardo Jablonsky

Father Bozano

Fabio Junqueira

Brumado

Nildo Parente

Vargas

Cibele Sta Cruz

Dancer

Marcos Ruas

Husband

Angelo de Matos

Doctor

Ivan de Aquino

Referee

Mike Royster

Announcer

Ivan Setta

Policeman

Ruy Brito Jr.

Bellboy

Sergio Jesus

Big Walter

Renato Roriz

Attractive Woman

Reno Moroni

Chef

Charles Myara

Milton

Frank Santos

Henrique

Ana Paula Bouzas

Girl

Monique Lafond

Flavia

8,247 feet

92 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Deluxe

World kickboxing champion David Sloan and his mentor Xian are in Rio for a big fight against Eric Martine, a hulk managed by shady American businessman Frank Lane. When Marcos, a street kid, steals Xian's camera, David gives chase, impressing the kid with his street-fighting skills, and retrieves the camera. Soon enough, Marcos, who speaks perfect English, has introduced David and Xian to his sister Isabella, and is showing them around town.

At a benefit for the homeless the following day, David faces Martine for the first time, while the innocent Isabella is spotted by Lane, who picks girls off the streets and turns them into hostesses as a sideline. He approaches David and his friends, and invites them to a party at his club. After the party, Isabella is kidnapped by Lane's henchmen. When the police prove sympathetic but unhelpful, David, Xian and Marcos begin their own investigation. Meanwhile, Lane offers David half a million dollars to throw the upcoming fight; David refuses.

On a tip that a man named Bronco might know something about the kidnapping, David and Xian visit an arms dealer, then storm Bronco's house, killing his seven bodyguards. Bronco's wife directs them to Lane, but when they burst into the house, they are taken prisoner. With the fight just a few days off, Lane devises a cunning plan to incapacitate David: he puts him on an exhausting training regimen of running through the woods wearing a backpack full of rocks, swimming, digging holes. Then, on the eve of the fight, he sends him back to his hotel for a refreshing night's sleep.

At the fight, as David starts to get the better of his opponent, Lane, now ruined financially, tries to escape with Isabella, but she is saved by Xian. Learning of Lane's prostitution ring, David goes back to set the girls free. In the subsequent showdown, Lane nearly shoots David, but is stabbed by young Marcos. The kindly police sergeant disposes of the evidence, and sees David and Xian to the airport.

Poor *Kickboxer III* – effectively disowned by its distributor, denied the slightest publicity budget in

Britain and whisked through one week of release at a single London cinema, it was officially consigned to oblivion before it could be judged on its own merits. However, *Kickboxer III: The Art of War* is, however, even sillier than you would expect. Nearly all kickboxing action has been set aside as the series now shifts into sitcom mode, with David and Xian bickering light-heartedly in a way that recalls nothing so much as Tom Selleck and the fastidious Higgins in *Magnum*.

Sasha Mitchell, so implausibly cute he looks like a refugee from *Beverly Hills 90210*, is back as David Sloan, last seen running a gym for street kids and avenging the deaths of his older brothers Eric and Kurt, apparently murdered in the hang-time between the original, muscular *Kickboxer* – a Jean-Claude Van Damme vehicle – and its sequel.

If *Kickboxer II* seemed a little breezy in introducing Mitchell as the younger brother that Van Damme apparently never knew he had, that was nothing compared with the random nature of this latest instalment. One minute David is a goofy, good-natured surfin' dude type, the next he is buying sub-machine guns from a street vendor and cheerfully executing seven men simply on the suspicion that their boss might be able to help him. However, as Xian points out, in time-honoured inscrutable-oriental fashion, "Just as water adapts itself to the configuration of the ground, so in war you must be flexible." Lane is a ruthless villain, but instead of using Isabella as a bargaining chip to force David to throw the fight, he opts for a physical training programme that seems to tone him up nicely. Then he loses all his money.

There is something approaching a campy panache to the film's utter disregard for plausibility, along with an enjoyably hammy performance by Marcos' flick-knife, and a brazenly inept attempt at a homage to *Casablanca* in the final shot. With so much levity going on, the *Art of War* subtitle appears to have been pulled out of a hat. But that is only to be expected, since, in its own way, *Kickboxer III* constitutes something of a milestone in disposability.

Caren Myers



More kicks than kecks: Sasha Mitchell

The Last Seduction

USA 1993

Director: John Dahl

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Metro Tartan

Production Company

ITC Entertainment Ltd

Producer

Jonathan Shestack

Co-producer

Nancy Rae Stone

Executive in Charge of Production

Guy J. Louthan

Executive in Charge of Development

Stacy Kramer

New York Line Producer

Alyse Beazler

Production Co-ordinators

Dale Roy Robinson

New York:

Livia Perez-Borrero

Unit Production Manager

Guy J. Louthan

Location Managers

Toni Maier

New York:

Jane Barber

Elizabeth Scheflow

Director of Post-production

Linda A. Borgeson

Casting

David Rubin &

Associates

Debra Zane

ADR Voice:

Burton Sharp

Assistant Directors

Eric N. Heffron

Michael J. Moore

Mara J. Lee

New York:

Todd Pfeiffer

Screenplay

Steve Barancik

Script Supervisor

Benu Bhandari

Director of Photography

Jeffrey Jur

Camera Operators

Brian Sullivan

Additional:

Beth-Jena Friedberg

Editor

Eric L. Beason

Associate Editor

Louis F. Cioffi

Production Designer

Linda Pearl

Art Director

Dina Lipton

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Anne F. Helmstadter

Set Decorator

Katherine Lucas

On Set Dresser

Thierry "T.T." Labbe

Set Dresser

Andrea Berty

Scenic

Lisa Gamel

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

John Hartigan

Costume Design

Terry Dresbach

Wardrobe Supervisor

Susan Michalek

Make-up/Hair Supervisor

Camille Henderson

Titles/Opticals

CFI

Music

Joseph Vitarelli

Music Supervisors

Karyn Rachtman

Jennifer Pyken

Music Editor

Allan K. Rosen

Patty Von Arx

Music Co-ordinator

Mind Your Music:

Mary Ramos

Songs

"Groove Me" by and performed by The ElderGreens; "Mamma Love Sissors", "Poison Kiss" by and performed by C.A. Terrell;

"Warmer Days" by John Popper, performed by Blues Traveler; "Cowgirl Blues" by and performed by Sandy Rogers; "Soft Touch" by Greg Wright,

performed by The Smokin' Joe Kubek Band

Sound Design

Fury & Grace Digital

Supervising Sound Editor

Jon Johnson

Sound Editors

Howard Neiman

Ben Wilkens

Sound Mixer

Mark Deren

ADR/Foley Mixer

J.R. Weston

Music Recordists/Mixers

Bradford Ellis

Nick Viterelli

Ultra stereo

consultant:

Brian Slack

Re-recording Mixers

Patrick Cyconne

Robert Harmon

Foley Artists

Casey Crabtree

Jim Bailey

Stunt Co-ordinator

Bill Erickson

Cast

Linda Fiorentino

Bridget Gregory

Peter Berg

Mike Swale

Bill Pullman

Clay Gregory

J.T. Walsh

Frank Griffith

Bill Nunn

Harlan

Herb Mitchell

Bob Trotter

Brien Varady

Chris

Dean Norris

Shep

Donna Wilson

Stacy

Mik Scriba

Ray

Michael Raysses

Phone Sales Rep

Zack Phifer

Gas Station Attendant

Erik-Anders Nilsson

Patricia R. Caprio

Boston Passersby

Renee Rogers

Receptionist

Bill Stevenson

Mail Boy

Walter Addison

Detective

Mike Lisenco

Bert

Serena

Trish Swale

Michelle Davison

911 Operator

Jack Shearer

Public Defender

9,900 feet

110 minutes

Ultra stereo

In colour

CFI

New York. Intern Clay Gregory sells a cache of pharmaceutical cocaine for \$700,000, and his wife Bridget runs off with the money. She goes to ground in the small town of Beston, where she picks up local man Mike Swale in a bar. Bridget's lawyer advises her to stay hidden while she applies for a divorce and she takes a job with an insurance company, assuming the name Wendy Kroy. Mike, who also works for the firm, pushes her for a deeper relationship but she holds back until Clay's private eye neighbour Harlan tracks her down. After staging a car accident in which Harlan is killed, Bridget sets about manipulating Mike into attempting the murder of Clay. First, she shows how actuarial tables and credit ratings can be used to single out heavily insured men who cheat on their wives, then she suggests they can turn a profit by hiring themselves as hit men to the wives.

Mike is appalled but Bridget manages to persuade him that she really loves him despite her outward hard-boiled indifference, and pretends that she has taken a trip to Miami and committed a murder for money. To introduce equality into their relationship, Mike consents to a contract killing and Bridget convinces him that Clay is a foreclosure lawyer who deserves to be murdered. Mike breaks into Clay's apartment but is unable to go through with the murder, whereupon Clay shows Mike his wedding photograph and deduces that he has been duped. Bridget arrives to find Mike in a rage. She kills Clay, then taunts Mike - with her knowledge of his deepest secret, that he briefly and accidentally married a transvestite - into raping her as she phones the police. Mike is unable to prove his version of events and Bridget keeps the money.

From the modestly effective *Kill Me Again* through the minor but highly satisfying *Red Rock West* to this perfect example of grunge noir, John Dahl has developed an interesting subcategory of medium-budget, moderately starry trick thriller. Without the baroque overkill of *Basic Instinct* or the top-shelf sleaze of Gregory Hippolyte's direct-to-video silicone slashers, Dahl redeems the 'erotic thriller', not so much in the explicitness of the sex scenes but in his revamping of the clas-

sic noir theme of the woman who uses all her sexual powers and any other psychological advantage to bend weaker-willed men to her avaricious purpose. *The Last Seduction* is the first of Dahl's films not to be scripted by the director, though the mix of Chinese-puzzle plotting and face-slapping cynicism found in Steve Barancik's outstanding screenplay is in keeping with the first two films. With a running time 15 minutes longer than those faster-paced, more explosively violent melodramas, *The Last Seduction* has a little more room to breathe, which allows the three central characters to develop beyond their functional roles as components in a fiendishly cunning plot.

Dahl always gets the best from his actors, and the playing here is excellent, with Peter Berg and Bill Pullman, whose doggly dumb decency and half-smart cringing are expertly contrasted, redeeming their uneven careers with funny, touching, creepy performances. The always interesting but lately neglected Linda Fiorentino avoids pastiche the 40s *femme fatale*, portraying Bridget as a contemporary monster heroine who effortlessly eclipses Sharon Stone's Catherine Trammell as villainess of the decade. Hard-faced and appallingly direct (her meeting-cute line with Mike is "fuck off"), Bridget occasionally overplays her sweetness act when manipulating lesser men, but Fiorentino always stirs in enough underlying contempt to signal the character's belief that the fools she dupes are not worth the effort of a really convincing imposture.

Like *Blood Simple*, *The Last Seduction* offers the pleasures of an intricate and gradually unfolding story of misunderstanding and murder, but here we are always a few steps behind Bridget, who is in complete control and able to turn any opportunity to her advantage. Because her motives are never fully explained, the implication is that Bridget really is the thoroughgoing bitch she claims to be. It is entirely due to Fiorentino's performance that she is as fascinating as she is rotten, and Barancik and Dahl capitalise on the audience's grudging sympathy for her by pulling an ending with no last-minute reprieve for the dim Mike, in which Bridget is driven away in a limousine with the loot.

Kim Newman



Dirty rotten scandal: Linda Fiorentino

Love and Human Remains

Canada 1993

Director: Denys Arcand

Certificate

18

Distributor

Rank

Production Company

Max Films

In association with

Atlantis Films

Executive Producers

Roger Frappier

Pierre Latour

Producer

Roger Frappier

Co-producer

Peter Sussman

Line Producer

Richard Lalonde

Production Co-ordinator

Johanne Pelletier

Production Manager

Richard Lalonde

Unit Manager

Estelle Lemieux

Location Manager

Michèle St-Arnaud

Post-production

Supervisor

Peter Alves

2nd Unit Director

Olivier Asselin

Casting

Toronto:

Deirdre Bowen

New York:

Lynn Kressel

Montreal:

Lucie Robitaille

Vancouver:

Stuart Aikins

Assistant Directors

David Webb

Normand Bourgie

Normand Labelle

Screenplay

Brad Fraser

Based on his play

Unidentified Human

Remains and the True

Nature of Love

Continuity Supervisor

France Lachapelle

Director of Photography

Paul Sarossy

Additional Photography

Daniel Jobin

Additional Camera

Operator

Michel Caron

Editor

Alain Baril

Production Designer

François Seguin

Set Decorators

Jean Kazemirchuk

Michèle Nolet

Ginette Robitaille

Draftsman

Peter Stratford

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Louis Craig

Costume Design

Denis Sperdouklis

Make-up Artist

Micheline Trépanier

Hairstylist

Réjean Goderre

Title Design

François Aubry

Music

John McCarthy

Music Performed by

Guitar:

Gerard Popma

Bob Bartolucci

Drums:

John Bouvette

Bass:

Pat Kilbride

Vocals:

Leslie Stanwyck

Accordion:

John Lettieri

Nathalie Guenon
Kim Handysides
Joan Heney
Lisa Hull
Barbara Jones
Luc LeBlanc
John Lozano

Gary McKeehan
Michèle-Barbara Pelletier
Maxime Roy
Harry Standjofski

8,984 feet
100 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour

Montreal. David, a former actor waiting tables, bemoans changing times with old friend Bernie, a city office worker. Dominatrix Benita whips a customer. A young girl is brutally murdered by an unknown assailant. After unprotected oral sex with occasional male lover Sal, David returns home to his flatmate Candy, a struggling book reviewer, with whom he previously had an unsuccessful heterosexual relationship. Bernie arrives, blood-stained from a scuffle and looking for a place to crash.

The next day, Candy is approached at the gym by female teacher Jerri, but later agrees to a date with bartender Robert. Teenage waiter Kane recalls with some affection David's role in a popular TV series. Having subsequently agreed to Jerri's offer of a date, Candy leaves Robert's apartment when his physical designs on her become too apparent. As the killer claims another female victim, David takes Kane to see Benita, whose psychic gifts reveal that the latter is in love with him. Jerri reveals her feelings for Candy, while Bernie confesses his despair to David. Dismayed by a tape of his old TV show, David later eschews sex with Kane, returning home to discover Candy has forsaken awkward love-making with Jerri for the sanctuary of his bed. The following evening, however, her sex with Robert is interrupted by a female caller on the answerphone.

Candy is at home waiting for Robert when Kane arrives to talk to David. Even more inconveniently, the increasingly obsessive Jerri arrives with a gift for Candy, who treats her harshly - much to the dismay of Robert, who arrives late. After everyone leaves, Candy accuses David of heartlessness, but he maintains his emotional independence. David plays back a phone message from Sal, who reveals he has been diagnosed HIV positive. Candy unsuccessfully tries to patch things up with Robert, while David ferries an aggressive Bernie to see Benita. Her psychic insights identify Bernie as the local serial killer and he swiftly leaves. Back at the flat, Candy is confronted by Jerri, then assaulted by Bernie. Kane saves the day before David returns to confront Bernie, who reveals his love for David before jumping to his death. Later, Kane and Candy accompany David to his first audition in years. Sal meets them at the door to confirm his good health before David tells his two friends, "I love you".

Denys Arcand broke through to international critical and box-office success in his film *The Decline of the American Empire*. In it, he juggled the manifold sexual manoeuvrings among a group of determinedly bourgeois col-

lege academics as the pretext for testing the primacy of individual over collective fulfilment within a de-politicised society in terminal moral decay. 1989's *Jesus of Montreal* played out a nudgingly put on Passion amid the triviascape of contemporary media culture, to probe our bases for belief in an era where faithlessness has become the norm.

In both films, the veteran Canadian radical managed to balance the sense of lofty pronouncement with a deft and only half-serious satiric touch, accurately zeroing in on whatever it was the chattering classes were chattering about that week. With this latest offering, however - significantly, not written by Arcand but adapted by Brad Fraser from his play *Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love* - that appearance of poise seems to have gone awry. There is enough in the film to suggest that Arcand has his finger somewhere near the pulse of anxiety-haunted sex in the 90s, but here his typically non-judgmental stance of uncommitted observer on a world gone mad seems increasingly like a glossily urbane cover for a worrying paucity of positive insight.

With its Generation X-ish cast of metropolitan fringe dwellers and looming reminders of the spectre of AIDS in the two signposted sequences of unprotected sex, the film seems to tick off as many of today's cultural worry-beads as it can gamely get through. From serial killers, to the legacy of child abuse (dominatrix Benita), to the babble of meaningless media proliferation, it flits hither and thither like the zap of David's remote control, as he grazes idly through multiple TV channels. This is an image Arcand pointedly repeats, underlining its metaphoric associations with the divergences in moral certainty that throw up a climate of choice upon choice but little conviction or guidance.

What is fresh and true about the film, however, is the authentic seam of physical and emotional need that Arcand and Fraser mine through such diverse individuals as Thomas Gibson's sardonically aloof homosexual David and Ruth Marshall's desperate literary reviewer. The latter wavers between unsatisfactory experiences with both men and women - all of whom, in turn, are looking for their own Ms

Right. Like some lonely hearts column made celluloid, the film certainly appreciates the scale of the issue, yet having to shuttle between so many significant characters does necessarily reduce the audience's potential emotive identification with each of them on an individual level, attractive performances notwithstanding.

As a screenwriter, Fraser has not quite managed to disguise the piece's theatrical origins. The farcical set-piece that brings David, Candy, Kane, Jerri and Robert agonisingly together in the same flat at the same time remains one of the film's funniest moments. But the climactic assault that wheels Jerri into the apartment to confront Candy over their failed liaison, brings the now-deranged Bernie in through the window to attack her and then manages to have teenager Kane on hand as her salvation, is notably unconvincing. Although the opening-out for the screen has allowed the resident serial killer more scope to roam the Montreal underpasses, Arcand seems as uninterested in the mystery slayer angle as a plot motor as he is by the psychic interludes with barely integrated plot device Benita, throwing red herrings at the rather dim Robert ("Nice tofu!" he proclaims, sitting down on Candy's prize futon) and supplying a weak, vaguely suspect motivation for the all too obviously unhinged Bernie. Here is a character who turns mass murderer in rage at his repressed, unrequited love for the best male friend who abandoned him: let the protestors who railed at *The Silence of the Lambs* make of that what they will.

Finally, the suicidal Bernie's last words are echoed by David's (genuinely?) cheery fade-out line, "I love you", suggesting that the world would really be a much better place if we all cared about each other that little bit more. For someone who sets himself up as a knowingly chic commentator on our vanities and mores, this is a bathetic point of arrival. Then again, with Arcand, a man whose eyebrow seems permanently raised, one can never be sure whether it is 'seriously' intended or not. He may tacitly tut-tut at our deficiencies in moral gravitas, but his own wry ambivalence looks more and more like a smokescreen around a hollow centre.

Trevor Johnston



They live by night: Mia Kirshner

Ma Saison Préférée

France 1993

Director: André Téchiné

Certificate

15

Distributor

Arrow Film

Production Companies

Films Alain Sarde/
T.F.1. Films
productions/D.A. Films
With the participation
of Soficas/Cofimage
4/Investimage 4/
La Répion Midi
Pyrénées/Canal +

Producer

Alain Sarde

Production Supervisor

Jean Jacques Albert

Production Manager

Nicole Lenfant

Assistant Directors

Denis Bergonhe

Michel Nasri

Screenplay

André Téchiné

Pascal Bonitzer

Script Supervisor

Claudine Taulère

Director of Photography

Thierry Arbogast

Editor

Martine Giordano

Set Design

Carlos Conti

Set Decorator

Alain Pitrel

Special Effects

Philippe Hubin

Costume Design

Claire Fraisse

Make-up

Cédric Gérard

Hair

Agathe Moro

Music

Philippe Sarde

Sound

Rémy Attal
Jean-Paul Mugal

Cast

Catherine Deneuve

Emilie

Daniel Auteuil

Antoine

Marthe Villalonga

Berthe

Jean-Pierre Bouvier

Bruno

Chiara Mastroianni

Anne

Carmen Chaplin

Khadija

Anthony Prada

Lucien

Michèle Moretti

Manager of Home

Jacques Nolot

Man at Cemetery

Bruno Todeschini

Man at Hospital

Jean Bousquet

Emilie's Father

Roschdy Zem

Medhi

Ingrid Caven

Woman in Bar

11,409 feet

127 minutes

In colour

Subtitles

Berthe, an elderly woman living on her own, collapses in her farmhouse in southern France. She goes to stay with her daughter Emilie to convalesce. Her mother's collapse allows Emilie to engineer a reunion with her estranged brother Antoine, a doctor. She invites him to come for Christmas, much to the annoyance of her husband Bruno, who thinks Antoine is a good-for-nothing.

Emilie and Bruno's daughter Anne, their stepson Lucien and his girlfriend Khadija are also present at the Christmas meal, which passes off uneventfully. After dinner, the young folk retire to Anne's bedroom. Anne admires Khadija's legs and asks her to perform a striptease.

Downstairs, Berthe wants to discuss what will happen when she dies. Antoine does not want to talk about death. Bruno calls Antoine a coward and they fight, Antoine retiring with a bloody nose. Berthe asks to return home. Emilie and Bruno argue; she tells Bruno that he has grown old and demands to sleep alone. Bruno suggests they separate. Anne, listening at the door, is upset. She goes to Khadija's room and asks to sleep with her.

Next summer, Berthe collapses again. Once more her collapse becomes the pretext of a meeting between Emilie and Antoine. She tells him that she has left Bruno and taken a flat in Toulouse. Emilie tells Antoine that Berthe wants to live with him, but ►



Open season: Catherine Deneuve, Daniel Auteuil

◀ he thinks an old people's home is a better idea.

After dropping their mother off at the home, Emilie stays at Antoine's flat and he suggests finding a place together. But Emilie thinks it is odd for a grown-up brother and sister to live together. After some time, Antoine and Emilie visit Berthe at the home. She does not recognise Emilie and believes that Antoine has been killed in a car crash. They remove her from the home and Antoine takes her for tests at his hospital. Berthe turns out to have a cerebral haemorrhage. She later dies and is buried in her home village. At the funeral, the family is reunited.

● *Ma Saison Préférée* is about an ordinary family: a middle-aged brother and sister and their ageing mother. It is not a family which functions particularly well, but they love each other very much. As their mother slips towards death, brother and sister desperately try to rebuild the family that was divided when they left home. Director André Téchiné, who also cowrote the script, has identified that sadness at the heart of adult relationships which comes from a nostalgia, however misplaced, for the simpler relationships of childhood.

Emilie feels this everyday nostalgia more than anyone else in the film. In one of the first scenes, she wakes to find her mother sitting outside by the swimming pool talking to herself. Emilie interrupts her and tries to comfort her, only to be told that her house is pretentious. The childhood bond of love is severed.

Emilie has become estranged from her mother, her brother and, it turns out, from her own emotions. Estrangement from her husband and children follow in the course of the film, but by then this seems inevitable. The damage has been done long before.

The film is split into four parts, for the four seasons of the year (beginning with Autumn), and each part is a self-contained film. Each is defined by the movement of the mother: Autumn (*'Le Départ'*) – she collapses and comes to stay with Emilie; Winter (*'Le Faux Pas'*) – Antoine comes for Christmas and she moves back home; Spring (*'Le Pas Suivant'*) – she collapses again and is moved into an old people's home; Summer (*'Le Retour'*) – her condition deteriorates and she dies.

The brutal linear progression of the film is broken only by the occasional

unconscious intrusion. Walking by the river while her mother is having tests in hospital, Emilie sees a vision of her parents. It is as if she is a little girl again. Her father is fishing and turns around and asks her if she would like to have a little brother to play with. She is not pleased. This is the nearest she comes to admitting that she had always resented Antoine's presence.

In a parallel scene, Antoine rushes home to his apartment after a night on the town. Emilie is staying with him, but for a moment he cannot see her. The window is open and as he looks down, Emilie is lying in a pool of blood below. He turns and finds that she is still asleep in bed. He has only imagined her death. This vision of horror from the dark places of Antoine's mind at once expresses sibling love and sibling rivalry; as if in atonement, Antoine later jumps from the same window and breaks his leg.

Written down in black and white, much of the film reads like so many clichés strung together. But these are the clichés which play upon us all. The images Téchiné uses to mark the passing of time, for instance – the smashing of a clock, a fire burning in the grate, a river running past – all claim their power from their familiarity. Nevertheless, this is an immensely risky business for Téchiné, however archetypal he tries to make his characters and the images that haunt them. In the hand of a lesser director, *Ma Saison Préférée* could have ended up as a soap opera. That it does not has much to do with Catherine Deneuve and Daniel Auteuil. Certainly for a French audience, the familiar sight of these two old hands adds to the familial atmosphere. Even for British audiences, they are an immensely comforting presence on the screen.

Towards the end of the film, Antoine meets up with Emilie's kids in a bar. A woman of a certain age sits in a corner singing about growing old. The barroom noises fade until all you can hear is her song, "Je ne serai plus là" (I won't be there any more). She gets up and leaves, and as she walks out in slow motion, everyone turns to watch her. The effect of watching this film is similar – like the people in the bar, we are faced with an equally stark, minimal vision of ageing. We are being asked to watch, in close-up, in slow motion, one extremely personal rendering of human pain.

Martin Bright

Maverick

USA 1994

Director: Richard Donner

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

An Icon production
In association with
Donner/Shuler-Donner
Productions

Producers

Bruce Davey
Richard Donner

Co-producer

Jim Van Wyck

Associate Producer

Alexander B. Collett

Production Supervisor

Jim Lemley

Unit Production Managers

Tony Brown

2nd Unit:

Jim Lemley

Location Managers

Kristan Wagner
Michael Beche
D'Ann Connelly

Post-production

Supervisor

Geno Escarrega

2nd Unit Director

Terry Leonard

Assistant Directors

Jim Van Wyck

John C. Scotti

Alisa Statman

Hayley H. Hsu

2nd Unit:

Princess O'Mahoney

Casting

Marion Dougherty

Screenplay

William Goldman
Based on the TV series
Maverick created by
Roy Huggins

Script Supervisor

Cynnie Troup

Director of Photography

Vilmos Zsigmond

2nd Unit Director

John Connor

Camera Operators

Ray del la Motte
Neal Norton

Special Visual Effects

Industrial Light
& Magic

Supervisor:

Steve Price

Producer:

Roni McKinley

Co-ordinator:

Alia Almeida Agha

Digital Matte Artists

Bill Mather
Yusei Uesugi

Computer Graphics

Supervisor:

Carl N. Frederick

Animation:

Rob Coleman

Editor

Stuart Baird

Mike Kelly

Production Designer

Tom Sanders

Art Director

Daniel Dorrance

Set Decorator

Lisa Dean

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Matt Sweeney

Special Effects

Bob Stoker

Lucinda Strub

Bruce Kuroyama

Steve Luprot

Neil Smith

Bob Simokovic

Animatronic Rattlesnakes

Edge Innovations

Effects Supervisor:

Walt Conti

Costume Design

April Ferry

Costume Supervisors

Paul Lopez

Linda Hendrikson

Make-up Supervisor

Michael Hancock

Hairstylists

Charlene Johnson

Chris Lee

Elaine Short

Title Design

Pittard-Sullivan-

Fitzgerald

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Musical

Randy Newman

Orchestrations

Don Davis

Jack Hayes

Music Producer

James Flamberg

Musical Supervisors

Larry Fitzgerald

Mark Hartley

Steve Dorff

Music Editor

Christopher Brooks

Songs/Music Extracts

"A Good Run of Bad

Luck" by Clint Black,

Hayden Nicholas,

performed by Clint

Black; "Ride Gambler

Ride" by and

performed by Randy

Newman; "Renegades,

Rebels and Rogues"

by Paul Nelson, Larry

Boone, Earl Clark,

performed by Tracy

Lawrence; "You Don't

Mess Around With Me"

by and performed by

Waylon Jennings;

"Amazing Grace"

performed by John

Anderson, Randy

Archer, Clint Black,

Suzy Bogguss, Gary

Chapman, Billy Dean,

Radney Foster, James

Garner, Mel Gibson,

Amy Grant, Noel

Haggard, Faith Hill,

Waylon Jennings,

Hal Ketchum, Tracy

Lawrence, Kathy

Mattea, Reba McEntire,

John Michael

Montgomery, Michael

Omertan, Johnny

Park, Eddie Rabbitt,

Restless Heart, Ricky

Van Shelton, Danny

Shirley, Larry Stewart,

Joy White,

Tammy Wynette

Supervising Sound Editor

Robert G. Henderson

Sound Editors

Brooke Ward

Darrin Martin

Virginia Cook

Samuel Crutcher

Greg Dillion

Bub Asman

David Horton

Jerry Jacobson

Marshall Winn

Jim Klingner

Lisa Peters

Supervising ADR Editor

James Simcik

ADR Editors

Richard Friedman

William Carruth

Robert Ulrich

Foley Editors

Scott Tinsley

David Horton Snr

Sound Mixer

Clark King

Music Recordist/Mixer

Frank Wolf

Re-recording Mixers

Les Fresholtz

Dick Alexander

Allen L. Stone

Stunt Co-ordinator

Mic Rodgers

Cast

Mel Gibson
Bret Maverick
Courtney Barilla
Jodie Foster
Annabelle Bransford
James Garner
Zane Cooper
Graham Greene
Joseph
Alfred Molina
Angel
James Coburn
Commodore Duval
Dub Taylor
Room Clerk
Geoffrey Lewis
Matthew Wicker
Paul L. Smith
Archduke
Dan Hedaya
Couple with
Concealed Guns
Dennis Fimple
Stuttering
Denver Pyle
Old Gambler
Clint Black
Sweet-faced Gambler
Max Perlich
Johnny Hardin
Art La Fleur
Leo V. Gordon
Paul Tuerpe
Poker Players
Jean De Baer
Margaret Mary
Paul Brinegar
Stage Driver
Hal Ketchum
Corey Feldman
John Woodward
Bank Robbers
Jesse Eric Carroll
Toshomnie Touchin
Stable Boys
John Meier
Steve Chambers
Doc Duhamel
Frank Orsatti
Unshaven Men

Lauren Shuler-Donner

Bathhouse Maid
Courtney Barilla
Kimberly Cullum
Music Box Girls
Gary Richard Frank
Crooked Dealer
Read Morgan
Steve Kahan
Stephen Liska
Dealers
Robert Jones
Bank Employee
John Mills Goodloe
Telegraph Operator
Vilmos Zsigmond
Albert Bierstadt
Waylon Jennings
Kathy Mattea
Couple with
Concealed Guns
Carlene Carter
Waitress
Vince Gill
Janice Gill
Spectators
William Smith
Chuck Hart
Doug McClure
Henry Darrow
Michael Paul Chan
Richard Blum
Bert Remsen
Robert Fuller
Donal Gibson
William Marshall
Bill Handerson
Cal Bartlett
Riverboat Poker Players
Danny Glover
Bank Robber

11,391 feet

127 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Technicolor

Anamorphic

● About to be lynched by the villainous Angel and his gang, gambler Bret Maverick recalls the events that led to this predicament.... Maverick rides into the town of Crystal River, hoping to win the \$3,000 he still needs for his \$25,000 entrance stake to the Three Rivers Poker Championship. In the saloon he joins a poker game that includes Angel, adventuress Annabelle Bransford and young gunslinger Johnny Hardin. When he starts winning Maverick sees off a challenge from Hardin, but is about to have trouble with Angel when a gang of vengeful thugs burst in looking for him. He beats them all up, to general applause. That night Annabelle comes to his room, but only in an attempt to lift his wallet.

Maverick visits banker Eugene to collect a debt, but the bank is robbed and he loses his wallet. When the thugs show up demanding payment for their fake attack he gives them his last \$100 and joins Annabelle on the stagecoach, where he finds her under the protection of Marshall Zane Cooper. En route they encounter missionaries who have been robbed by a gang posing as Indians. Maverick, Annabelle and Cooper track down the gang and restore the money – only for a war party of real Indians to show up. Volunteering as a sacrifice, Maverick is taken captive. The Indian chief, though, is his old friend Joseph, who owes him money and suggests that a Russian archduke, camped nearby on a safari, might pay well to shoot an Indian. Maverick dresses up,

pretends to be killed, and nets \$1,000. Heading for the championship, he encounters Angel and his gang and is strung up, but contrives to escape....

On board the championship's river-boat venue Maverick finds Angel and two sidekicks, also Annabelle who, like him, is still short of her full stake. Spotting the archduke, Maverick cons enough out of him to put them both in the game. Commodore Duval declares the championship open: 40 players put up \$25,000 each, all guarded by Marshall Cooper. Round one eliminates everyone but Maverick, Angel, Annabelle and the Commodore. During the interval, Maverick and Annabelle make love. In the final round Maverick emerges the winner. Angel and his henchmen pull guns, but are shot down by Cooper and Maverick. Cooper then holds up everybody and makes off with the half million dollars. Later, encamped at night, he is joined by his accomplice, the Commodore, who pulls a gun on him – at which point Maverick appears, takes the money and leaves the other two squabbling. Maverick is relaxing in a New Orleans bathhouse when Cooper shows up, but turns out to be his father. As the two laugh over the scam Annabelle arrives and takes the money at gunpoint. After she's gone, Maverick reveals he still has half the money, and looks forward to getting the rest back.

“Nearly got hanged maself once,” observes Alfred Molina’s ripely villainous Angel, happily stringing up the hero in the opening sequence of *Maverick* – “Didn’t much care for it.” There’s no mistaking the tone: we’re back in the reassuringly disenchanted world of the latter-day comedy Western, where everyone’s on the take and talks in laconic wise-cracks. And if *Maverick* never quite exerts the cynical bite of the finest specimens of the genre – *The Missouri Breaks*, say, or Mankiewicz’s neglected *There Was a Crooked Man* – it’s entertain-



Joker in the pack: Mel Gibson

ing, amiable and (thanks to Vilmos Zsigmond’s rich, burnished photography) consistently good to look at.

Perhaps inevitably, the film has been cleaned up a little – both morally and visually – from the classic television series it’s based on. The TV *Maverick*, originally screened from 1957 to 1962 and including episodes directed by Budd Boetticher and Robert Altman, differed refreshingly from other tele-operators of the period in featuring a hero with no redeeming features beyond ingenuity and charm. Cowardly, devious, mercenary and wholly self-interested, James Garner’s Bret Maverick was about as far from the upright Gary Cooper model as could be imagined – which of course was just what made him so appealing. His big-screen incarceration sets out the same way, but now and then succumbs to regrettable impulses of decency, like handing back a fairly earned \$3,000 to a bunch of missionaries. TV *Maverick*, one suspects, might have made the same noble gesture – before sneaking round the back to retrieve the cash.

Still, those who feared, after *Hamlet* and *The Man Without a Face*, that Mel Gibson might be falling prone to Kevin-Costnerish solemnity should be reassured by his likeably self-mocking performance. If there’s a hint of worry around the eyes, it’s perhaps that Gibson sensed he was being upstaged by some very class acts indeed: Jodie Foster’s sexy, feisty Annabelle; James Coburn, engagingly relaxed as ever; and of course Garner, the original Maverick himself, deftly hitting just the right note as the seemingly principled lawman.

Unexpectedly, given a script by William Goldman, the film’s main weakness lies in its narrative structure. Not so much in the first half, with its picaresque one-damn-thing-after-another circling back to the opening scene; this kind of episodic plot has honourable antecedents in the genre, as *Maverick* acknowledges with a cheeky visual nod to Ford’s *Stagecoach*. The problem lies with the ending, or rather the endings, that follow the poker tournament, where each time the action seems to be winding down it gets kick-started with yet another plot twist. “When in doubt,” Raymond Chandler famously advised, “have a man come through the door with a gun.” It’s a good trick, but shouldn’t be reprised too often. As one armed character after another shows up to hijack the loot, the joke comes to feel mechanical and the laughter dies.

For most of its length, though, the film does not disappoint, least of all in its set-piece action sequences, secure in the practised hands of Richard (*Lethal Weapon*) Donner. Comfortably irreverent, *Maverick* hardly offers a fresh take on the genre, since most of the conventions it spoofs were thoroughly sent up years ago. But if, as seems likely, the long-heralded revival of the Western is at last upon us, a film like this bodes well for hours of undemanding pleasure to come.

Philip Kemp

My Girl 2

USA 1994

Director: Howard Zieff

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Columbia TriStar

Production Company

Imagine Films

Entertainment

Executive Producer

Joseph M. Caracciolo

David T. Friendly

Howard Zieff

Producer

Brian Grazer

Associate Producer

Devorah Moos-Hankin

Production Co-ordinator

Kathy Sarreal

Unit Production Manager

Joseph M. Caracciolo

Location Manager

Charles Harrington

Assistant Directors

Jerry Sobul

Alan Brimfield

Casting

Alan Berger

Screenplay

Janet Kovalick

Script Supervisor

Betty Abbott Griffin

Director of Photography

Paul Elliott

Camera Operator

David Boyd

Editor

Wendy Greene Bricmont

Production Designer

Charles Rosen

Art Director

Diane Yates

Set Design

Harold Fuhrman

Set Decorator

Mary Olivia McIntosh

Production Illustrator

Sherman G. Labby

Costume Design

Shelley Komarov

Wardrobe Supervisors

Norman Burza

Elaine Maser

Make-up

Frank H. Griffin Jr.

Hair stylist

Frances Mathias

Music

Cliff Eidelman

Songs/Music Extracts

“Our House” by Graham

Nash, performed by

Crosby, Stills, Nash &

Young; “The Loco-

Motion” by Carole King;

Gerry Goffin; “The

Boogie Woogie Flu” by

Huey P. Smith, performed

by Johnny Ring; “Baby

Love” by Brian Holland,

Lamont Dozier, Edward

Holland, performed by

The Supremes; “All My

Loving” by John Lennon,

Paul McCartney; “Bennie

and the Jets”, “Tiny

Dancer” by Elton John,

Bernie Taupin,

performed by Elton John;

“Shringar” by Hari Har

Rao; “Reason To Believe”

by Tim Hardin,

performed by Rod

Stewart; “Smile” by

Charles Chaplin, John

Turner, Geoffrey Parsons;

“Swingtown” by Steve

Miller, Chris McCarty,

performed by Steve

Miller Band; “Doctor My

Eyes” by and performed

by Jackson Browne;

“Walk Away Renee” by

Mike Lookofski, Anthony

Sansone, Robert Calilli,

performed by Rick Price;

“Frankenstein” by Edgar

Winter, performed by

Edgar Winter Band;

“Don’t Worry Baby” by Brian Wilson, Roger Christian, performed by The Beach Boys; “My Girl” by William “Smokey” Robinson, Ronald White, performed by The Temptations; “Ride of the Valkyries” by Richard Wagner; “Hungarian Rhapsody #1” by Franz Liszt; “Four Seasons” by Antonio Vivaldi;

Sound Editors

Michael J. Benavente

Paul Timothy Carden

Susan Dudeck

Simon Coke

Foley Editors

Donald Sylvester

Jonathon Klein

Sound Recordist

John Sutton III

Cast

Dan Aykroyd

Harry Sultenfuss

Jamie Lee Curtis

Shelly Sultenfuss

Anna Chlumsky

Vada Sultenfuss

Austin O’Brien

Nick Zsigmond

Richard Masur

Phil Sultenfuss

Christine Ebersole

Rose Zsigmond

John David Souther

Jeffrey Pommeroy

Angeline Ball

Maggie Muldoven

Aubrey Morris

Alfred Beidermyer

Gerrit Graham

Dr Sam Helburn

Ben Stein

Stanley Rosenfield

Keone Young

Daryl Tanaka

Anthony R. Jones

Arthur

Jodie Markell

Hillary Mitchell

Richard Beymer

Peter Webb

David Purdham

Mr Owett

Kevin Sifuentes

Julio

Lauren Ashley

Judy

Roland Thomson

Kevin

Dan Hildebrand

Hari Krishna

Charles Fleischer

Cab Driver

George D. Wallace

Gnarly Old Man

Cindy Benson

Tamara Olson

James Parkes

Bart Sumner

Wedding Guests

Megan Butler

Wardrobe Lady

Wendy Schall

Emily

Lisa Bradley

Katie

Brendan Cowles

Alex Donnelly

Misa Koprova

Mark Jupiter

Mary Elizabeth Murphy

Alex Nevil

Acting Troupe

Ryan Olson

Beau Richardson

Kevin’s Gang

Renee Wedel

Beverly Hills Matron

8,879 feet

99 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

after she was born. Her father Harry can provide little information, so Vada goes to Los Angeles, her Mom’s home town, where she stays with her Uncle Phil, his new girlfriend Rose, and Nick, her son from a previous marriage.

At first, Nick and Vada seem to dislike each other, but he agrees to help her. They visit assorted people who each tell her a little about her mother, including a policeman, a wedding photographer, a poet, an eccentric woman who runs a second-hand shop, and Jeffrey Pommeroy, who was briefly married to Vada’s mother. He shows Vada a Super-8 film of her mother, which solves many of the mysteries that have cropped up in her search. Before Vada leaves, Phil decides to propose to Rose. At the airport, Nick and Vada kiss. Back home, where her stepmother Shelly has given birth to a baby boy, Vada decides that her mother’s greatest achievement was having her.

“Part adventure, part miracle,” is how Vada describes her quest in *My Girl 2*. But the greater part of it is a viscous blob of clichés, painful to endure. This is the follow-up to the only slightly less soppy *My Girl*, itself a shameless rip-off, with its use of voice-overs and nostalgia, of the TV series *The Wonder Years*, except with a female protagonist. Apart from the cockle-warming spectacle of Macaulay Culkin being stung to death by bees, the first film was mildly redeemed by patches of passable dialogue and by Dan Aykroyd and Jamie Lee Curtis in a sub-plot about middle-aged romance. Sadly, they only pass through the sequel long enough to collect their cheques.

In their place, Richard Masur and Christine Ebersole act out their parallel adult love story, to provide a suitably reactionary example for the children by having them decide to marry rather than “live in sin”. The general thrust of the film is nauseatingly moralistic, with Vada shocked to learn her mother was once suspended from school for smoking. The logic behind setting the film in the 70s gradually becomes apparent. Back-to-basics ideology, which dictates that a woman’s greatest achievement is having children, is safely enshrined in the golden glow of the past. This seems to be the sole purpose of a period setting only half-heartedly evoked by the odd portrait of Nixon and an incessant soundtrack of minor hits of the time. There are also such glaring anachronisms as a Benetton shop in the background, and the presence of sound on a home Super-8 camera from the 50s.

In the press release, director Howard Zieff is described as an admirer of Frank Capra, whose work was clearly a model for the first film’s small-town sentiment and preoccupation with mortality. This time, death has far less sting, and with the transfer to Los Angeles, Capra’s shadow has become even fainter. The crude parody of L.A. social types is just another cheap exercise in Hollywood narcissism, as well as a way to skimp on location costs. **Leslie Felperin Sharman**

Needful Things

USA 1994

Director: Fraser C. Heston

Certificate
15
Distributor
Rank
Production Company
Castle Rock
Entertainment
In association with
New Line Cinema
Executive Producer
Peter Yates
Producer
Jack Cummins
Associate Producer
Gordon Mark
Production Co-ordinators
Elaine Flemming
Heather Boyd
Production Manager
Gordon Mark
Unit Manager
Stewart Bethune
Assistant Directors
Anthony Brand
Sandra Mayo
Bonnie Benwick
Casting
Marty Gail Artz
Barbara Cohen
Canada:
Stuart Aikins
L.A. Associate:
Donnalyn Greenbaum
Vancouver Associate:
Bill Haines
Screenplay
W. D. Richter
Based on the novel
by Stephen King
Script Supervisor
Christine Wilson
Director of Photography
Tony Westman
Camera Operators
Armin Matter
Jim Menard
Steadicam Operators
Julian Chojnacki
Steve Campanelli
Editor
Rob Kobrin
Production Designer
Douglas Higgins
Set Decorator
Dominique Fauquet-
Lemaître
Set Dressers
John Kennedy
Rick Patterson
MacLeod Sinclair
Doug Carnegie
Della Mae Johnston
Scenic Artist
Hermínio Kam
Storyboard Artist
Chris Bartleman
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Gary Paller
Special Effects
Steve Davis
Marty Huculiak
Costume Design
Monique Prudhomme
Costume Supervisor
Debbie Douglas
Make-up Artists
Sandy Cooper
Melanie Hughes
Special Make-up Effects
Tibor Furkas
Hairstylist
Ian Ballard
Title Design
Deborah Ross Film
Design
Titles
Pacific Title
Music
Patrick Doyle
Music Conductor
David Snell
Additional Music
Arrangements
Gavin Greenaway
Orchestrations
Lawrence Ashmore
John Bell

Music Supervisor
John Stronach
Music Editors
John Stronach
Dean Beville
Music Co-ordinator
Maggie Rodford
Songs/Music Extracts
"Achy Breaky Heart"
by Don Von Tress,
performed by Billy Ray
Cyrus; "Great Balls of
Fire" by Otis Blackwell,
Jack Hammer,
performed by Jerry Lee
Lewis; "My Favourite
Things" by Richard
Rodgers, Oscar
Hammerstein II;
"Wild Man" by Susan
Longacre, Rick Giles,
performed by Rick
Giles; "It Wasn't God
Who Made Honky Tonk
Angels" by J. D. Miller,
performed by Kitty
Wells; "Ave Maria"
by Franz Schubert,
performed by Nicole
Tibbels; "In the Hall
of the Mountain King"
from *Peer Gynt* by
Edvard Hagerut Grieg
Supervising Sound Editor
Richard L. Anderson
Dialogue Editors
Michael Chock
Chuck Smith
ADR Editor
Alan L. Niberg
Foley Editor
Valerie Davidson
Sound Mixer
Eric Batut
Foley Mixer
Ezra Dweck
ADRMixers
"Doc" Kane
Bill Sheppard
Music Records/Mixer
Paul Hume
Foley Recordist
Dana A. Johnson
Dubbing Recordist
J. Allen Hurd
Re-recording Mixers
John Reitz
Dave Campbell
Gregg Rudloff
Sound Effects Editors
Eric Lindemann
John Hulsman
Sound Effects
John Pospisil
Foley Artists
Joan Rowe
Chris Moreana
Group ADR
Loop Sex
Stunt Co-ordinator
Bill Ferguson

Cast
Max Von Sydow
Leland Gaunt
Ed Harris
Sheriff Alan Pangborn
Bonnie Bedelia
Polly Chalmers
Amanda Plummer
Nettie Cobb
J. T. Walsh
Danforth Keeton III
Ray McKinnon
Deputy Norris
Ridgewick
Duncan Fraser
Hugh Priest
Valri Bromfield
Wilma Jerzyk
Shane Meier
Brian Rusk
Lisa Blount
Cora Rusk
W. Morgan Sheppard
Father Meehan
Don S. Davis
Reverend Rose

Campbell Lane
Frank Jewett
Eric Schneider
Henry Beaufort
Frank C. Turner
Pete Jerzyk
Gillian Barber
Myrtle Keeton
Deborah Wakeham
Myra
Tamsin Kelsey
Sheila Ratcliff
Lochlyn Munro
John LaPointe
Bill Croft
Andy Clutterbuck
Dee Jay Jackson
Eddie Warburton
Ann Warn Pegg
Ruth Roberts

Gary Paller
George Cobb
Sarah Sawatsky
Teenage Girl
Robert Easton
Lester Pratt
Mike Chute
Young Hugh
Mel Allen
Baseball Announcer
Trevor Denman
Race Track Announcer
K-Gin
Raider

10,840 feet
120 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour

Castle Rock, Maine. The mysterious Leland Gaunt moves into town and opens a curio shop, Needful Things. His first customer is Brian Rusk, a boy to whom he sells a valuable Mickey Mantle baseball card for less than a dollar, on condition Brian play a prank on turkey farmer Wilma Jerzyk by splashing her washing with mud. Wilma assumes the vandalism is the work of her adversary, neurotic waitress Nettie Cobb, and threatens to kill Nettie's beloved dog.

Sheriff Alan Pangborn, newly engaged to Nettie's boss Polly Chalmers, settles a dispute between local official Danforth 'Buster' Keeton and Deputy Norris Ridgewick, who insists on giving Keeton parking tickets. By selling the townsfolk oddly personalised items (a first edition of *Treasure Island*, a 50s high-school jacket), Gaunt gets them to play further pranks, exacerbating feuds between individuals and factions. Keeton, who has embezzled the town's funds to cover gambling debts, buys a horse-race game with predictive powers, but is furious when he finds his house plastered with parking tickets – allegedly from Ridgewick but actually planted by Nettie – detailing his crimes.

When Nettie's dog is killed and Wilma's windows broken, each assumes the other is guilty and they murder each other. Brian, who has broken Wilma's windows, tries to kill himself, convincing Alan that Gaunt is not human. Polly, who is given a cure for crippling arthritis, is led to believe Alan is in league with Keeton. Keeton murders his wife and takes from



Cartoon crackers: J. T. Walsh

Gaunt enough explosives to blow up the town, starting with the Catholic church. As the townsfolk attack each other and buildings burn, Alan makes a speech accusing Gaunt and everyone realises that they have been fooled. Polly throws away her cure while Keeton, weighed down with dynamite, rushes into Needful Things and blows up the shop. Gaunt emerges unscathed from the explosion, promises to encounter Alan and Polly's grandson in the twenty-first century, and leaves town.

Needful Things, which takes nearly 800 pages to milk a plot more suited to a short story, may well be Stephen King's worst novel. This adaptation, which Fraser C. Heston took over from Peter Yates early in production, can do little with the book's repetitive storyline, which has Leland Gaunt making the same bargain with a succession of characters. The release version bears all the marks of having been trimmed from a considerably longer cut: Lisa Blount, unbilled as Brian's mother but listed as one of the featured stars in pre-release publicity, is glimpsed silently in several scenes, finally looting a chainsaw from a riot-smashed hardware store for an amusing sight gag.

Nevertheless, *Needful Things* is a satisfying, double-edged horror movie. Boiled down to essentials, the premise is more appealing here than in the novel, especially since Max Von Sydow as the malevolent intruder who causes havoc in the Castle Rock community adds much humour and style to King's thinly conceived Devil. He reminisces about "that carpenter from Nazareth" and complains that while God is omnipresent and all powerful, he's "just one lonely guy" spreading evil around the world. The influence of *Twin Peaks* can be detected in the choice of actors – Ed Harris as Sheriff Pangborn is the anchor of decency who allows the film to cut loose with such cartoonish comic horror acting as J.T. Walsh's unhinged councilman Keeton, who murders his wife because she uses his hated nickname 'Buster', and Valri Bromfield's cleaver-wielding turkey farmer, who has apparently chosen her career because it gives her the opportunity to behead small creatures on a daily basis.

Heston, unlike many Stephen King adaptors, does not pretend that the author's world is anything but a horror movie arena. The film is awash with creepy camera-movements, unrealistic gloom, cackling maniacs, dreamy flashes, *misterioso* music and strange effects. Elements of King's sophomore social comment creep in (when the church blows up, the priest refuses to believe the Devil is responsible, blaming "those goddam Baptists"), but the world of Castle Rock is so enclosed and unreal that it is hard to be annoyed by the simplistic misanthropy. Nobody's idea of great horror, this is still a long way from being the worst film based on a Stephen King text.

Kim Newman

North

USA 1994

Director: Rob Reiner

Certificate
PG
Distributor
Rank
Production Company
New Line Cinema
In association with
Castle Rock
Entertainment/
Columbia
Executive Producers
Jeffrey Stott
Andrew Scheinman
Producers
Rob Reiner
Alan Zweibel
Production Supervisor
Helen Pollak
Production Co-ordinators
Katie Gilbert
Alaska:
Alison Sherman
New York:
Denise Pinckley
Production Managers
Jeffrey Stott
Alaska:
Jim Behnke
Unit Production Manager
New York:
Donna Bloom
Location Managers
Paul Pav
Alaska:
Bob Crockett
New York:
Ginger Sledge
Assistant Directors
Frank Capra III
John Wildermuth
Alaska:
Nilo Otero
Casting
Jane Jenkins
Janet Hirshenson
Alaska:
Carol Carlson
Screenplay
Alan Zweibel
Andrew Scheinman
Based on the novel
by Alan Zweibel
Script Supervisor
Kerry Lyn McKissick
Directors of Photography
Adam Greenberg
Alaska:
Mark Vargo
Camera Operator
M. Todd Henry
Moshe Levin
Gabor Kover
Steadicam Operator
Liz Ziegler
VistaVision Operator
Mark Vargo
Film Editor
Robert Leighton
Production Designer
J. Michael Riva
Art Directors
David Klassen
New York:
Bob Shaw
Art Department
Co-ordinator
Carol Kiefer
Set Design
Darrell L. Wight
Dawn Synder
Virginia Randolph
Rob Woodruff
Set Decorators
Michael Taylor
New York:
George DeTitta
Set Dressers
Mike Hanrahan
Philippe Rockholt
Mark Davidson
Carl Cassara
Joseph L. Byrne
Production Illustrator
Tom Lay
Storyboard Artist
Sherman Labby

Maps
Tom Southwell
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Terry Frazee
Special Effects
Gino Crum
Donald Frazee
Logan Frazee
Greg Curtis
Costume Design
Gloria Gresham
Costume Supervisors
Chuck Velasco
Margo Baxley
New York:
Kiki Schrader
Make-up
Edouard F. Henriques
Tom Hoerber
Pete Altobelli
Dale Bach-Siss
New York:
Peter Montagna
Hairstylists
Toni Anne Walker
Kim Santantonio
Susan Germaine
New York:
Bill Farley
Title Design
R/Greenberg Associates
West Inc
Opticals
Pacific Title
Music
Marc Shaiman
Music Conductor
Artie Kane
Orchestrations
Jeff Atmajian
Larry Blank
Brad Dechter
Mark McKenzie
Music Producer
Marc Shaiman
Supervising Music Editor
Scott Stambler
Songs/Music Extracts
"If I Were a Rich Man"
from *Fiddler on the Roof*
by Jerry Block, Sheldon
Harnick; "Cherry Pink
and Apple Blossom
White" by Jacques
Larue, Louiguy; "Dallas
Theme" by Jerrold
Immel; "Theme from
Bonanza" by Jay
Livingston, Ray Evans;
"Hawaiian War Chant
(Ta-Hu-Wa-Hu-Wai)"
by Johnny Noble,
Leleiohaku; "Tiny
Bubbles" by Leon
Pober; "My Little Grass
Shack" by Johnny
Noble, Bill Cogswell,
Tommy Harrison;
"Blue Hawaii" by
Ralph Rainger, Leo
Robin; "The Girl from
Ipanema" by Antonio
Carlos Jobim, Vinicius
De Moraes, English
lyrics by Norman
Cimbel; "Winter
Wonderland" by Felix
Bernard, Dick Smith;
"Theme from *The Andy
Griffith Show*" by Earle
Hagen, Herbert
Spencer; "Father Knows
Best Theme" by Don
Ferris, Irving
Friedman; "Fine and
Dandy" by Kay Swift,
Paul James
Choreographer
Pat Birch
Supervising Sound Editor
Robert Grieve
Sound Editors
Stu Bernstein
Alison Fisher
Michael Dressel
David Arnold
Daniel Yale

ADR Supervisor
Jessica Gallavan
ADR Voice-over
Co-ordinator
Leigh French
Foley Supervisor
John Murray
Sound Mixer
Bob Eber
Sound Recordists
Dan Sharp
John Brilhante
Foley Recordist
Nerses Gezalayan
Sound Re-recordists
Kevin O'Connell
Rick Kline
Foley Mixer
Jim Ashwill
Foley Artists
Dan O'Connell
Gary Hecker
Stunt Co-ordinator
R.A. Rondell
Film Extracts
The Disorderly Orderly
(1964)
The Bellboy (1960)
The Errand Boy (1961)
The Patsy (1964)

Cast
Elijah Wood
North
Jason Alexander
North's Dad
Julia Louis-Dreyfus
North's Mom
Marc Shaiman
Piano Player
Jussie Smollet
Adam
Taylor Fry
Zoe
Alana Austin
Sarah
Peg Shirley
Teacher
Chuck Cooper
Umpire
Alan Zweibel
Coach
Donavon Dietz
Assistant Coach
Teddy Bergman
Michael Cipriani
Joran Corneal
Joshua Kaplan
Teammates
James F. Dean
Dad Smith
Glen Walker Harris Jr
Jeffrey Smith
Nancy Nichols
Mom Jones
Ryan O'Neill
Andy Wilson
Kim Delgado
Dad Johnson
Tony T. Johnson
Steve Johnson
Mathew McCurley
Winchell
Carmela Rappazzo
Receptionist
Jordan Jacobson
Vice President
Rafale Yermazyan
Austrian Dancer
Jon Lovitz
Arthur Belt
Mitchell Group
Dad Wilson
Pamela Harley
Glenn Kubota
Matthew Arkin
Mark Coppola
Colette Bryce
Reporters
Bryson Stewart
Bailiff
Alan Arkin
Judge Buckle
Alan Rachins
Defence Attorney
Abbe Levin
Lola Pashalinski
Kimberly Topper
C.C. Loveheart
Helen Hanft
Carol Honda
Peggy Gormley
Lillias White
Operators
Dan Aykroyd
Pa Tex
Reba McEntire
Ma Tex

Mark Meisner
Danielle Jeffery
Bryan Anthony
Carmit Bachar
James Markness
Krista Buonauro
Brett Heine
Kelly Cooper
Chad E. Allen
Stefanie Roos
Donovan Keith Hesser
Jennifer Strovos
Christopher D. Childers
Sebastian La Cause
Lydia E. Merritt
Greg Rosatti
Kelly Shenefiel
Texas Dancers
Jennifer Pantom
Betty Lou
Keone Young
Governor Ho
Lauren Tom
Mrs Ho
Gil Janklowkz
Man on Beach
Maud Winchester
Stewart's Mom
Tyler Gucciullo
Stewart
Fritz Sperberg
Stewart's Dad
Bryn Hartman
Waitress
Larry Williams
Alaskan Pilot
Graham Greene
Alaskan Dad
Kathy Bates
Alaskan Mom
Abe Vigoda
Alaskan Grandpa
Richard Belzer
Barker
Monty Bass
Farell Thomas
Billy Daydodge
Henri Towers
Caroline Carr
Eva Larson
Eskimos
Ben Stein
Curator
Marla Frees
Robert Rigamonti
DC Reporters
Alexander Godunov
Amish Dad
Kelly McGillis
Amish Mom
Jay Black
Amish Pilot
Rosalind Chao
Chinese Mom
George Kee Cheung
Chinese Barber
Ayo Adejube
African Dad
Darwyn Carson
African Mom
Lucy Lin
Female Newscaster
Faith Ford
Donna Nelson
John Ritter
Ward Nelson
Scarlett Johanssen
Laura Nelson
Jesse Zeigler
Bud Nelson
Robert Costanzo
Al
Audrey Klebahn
Secretary
Philip Levy
Panhandler
Dan Grimaldi
Hot Dog Vendor
Marvin Braverman
Waiter
Wendel Josepher
Ticket Agent
Adam Zweibel
Matthew Horn
Sarah Martinek
Brian Levinson
Kids in Airport
D.L. Shroder
Federal Express Agent
Bruce Willis
Narrator

7,821 feet
87 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Anamorphic

11-year-old North decides to divorce his parents, who bicker constantly. Visiting his favourite shopping-mall hideaway he meets a man dressed up as a pink rabbit who advises him to go home. But at school North is hailed as a hero and Winchell, the editor of the school magazine, takes a particular interest in his case. With the help of Arthur Belt, an unscrupulous lawyer, North takes his parents to court. The judge tells him he must find new parents before a certain date or be put in an orphanage. On hearing the news, North's parents go into comas and are mounted as museum exhibits. North is besieged by invitations from potential parents. Meanwhile, unbeknown to him, Winchell and Belt, hoping to capitalise on North's case, are organising a children's uprising.

North's search for parents starts in Texas with Pa and Ma Tex, but they are not suitable. He ends up trekking around the world, frequently bumping into a man who resembles the pink rabbit. As the deadline draws near, North decides to settle for the Nelsons, who seem to be the perfect family. But they are still not quite right. North's real parents come out of their comas and are kidnapped by Winchell. They make a video pleading with him to come home, but Winchell re-edits it and transforms it into hate-mail. When North receives the video he despairs and resolves to run away rather than be put in an orphanage. Winchell decides he should be assassinated, and North ends up in Manhattan pursued by Winchell's henchmen. In Central Park, he meets a school friend who gives him the original version of his parents' video.

Fleeing his pursuers, North ends up in the ballroom of a big hotel where a reception is taking place. In the dressing room of the MC, who looks rather familiar, he watches the video and realises that his parents do love him. The MC arranges to Federal Express North back to his parents before the deadline expires. But he arrives home to find his parents have been kidnapped. Later they are released and race to meet North at his secret hideaway. Parents and son are reunited just in time, but Winchell's henchman is still on North's trail and takes aim at

the boy. At this point, North wakes up, realising that his adventures have all been a terrible dream.

One of the first rules of film-making should be: never end a story, "She woke up and realised it was all a dream." It is a shame that Rob Reiner and Alan Zweibel ignored this edict, since *North* has the makings of an agreeable comic fantasy for kids along the lines of *Home Alone*. The winsome North (played by a bug-eyed Elijah Wood, who seems intent on challenging the Culkin crown), determined to divorce his unsatisfactory parents, undertakes a Cook's tour in which he checks out a range of potential adoptive families, only to find they all suck.

Unfortunately, the world he navigates owes more to Disney than to the UN. Caricatures such as Ma and Pa Tex (Dan Aykroyd and Country and Western star Reba McEntire, complete with hoe-down musical number) and the Amish family (*Witness*' Kelly McGillis and Alexander Godunov as Mom and Pop) are anarchic and engaging enough. And the depiction of Alaska as a country in which grandparents are floated unceremoniously out to sea, or France as a place which has Jerry Lewis on every television channel has a certain endearing craziness. But to portray 'Africa' as something out of a nineteenth-century missionary's picture book is unforgiveable - a well-intentioned jibe at stereotypes which seriously misfires.

The problem is that *North* never achieves the scathing satire to which it aspires. The Nelsons, the all-American happy family with whom North briefly settles, are straight out of 50s sit-coms such as *The Donna Reed Show*. But Dad at the barbecue in his patterned sweater and Mom with her pristine apron and shiny coiffure come across as lame pastiches in comparison with the more sharply skewed portraits in *Parents*, for example. Even the casting of John Ritter, who played the beleaguered father in *Problem Child*, as Nelson père fails to give these scenes edge. Audiences for whom Addams family values have become the norm deserve better than bland dreams featuring Bruce Willis in a fluffy, fluorescent pink rabbit suit.

Lizzie Francke



What's up Doc: Bruce Willis, Elijah Wood

Paris France

Canada 1993

Director: Gérard Coccoiritti

Certificate
Not yet issued
Distributor
Feature Film Company
Production Companies
Alliance
Communications
Corporation/Lightshow
With the participation of
Telefilm Canada/
Ontario Film
Development
Corporation
Executive Producer
Stéphane Reichel
Producers
Eric Norlen
Allan Levine
Co-producers
Kevin May
Tom Willey
Production Co-ordinator
Ty Hyland-Lott
Production Manager
Kevin May
Location Manager
Morton Dorrell
Post-production
Supervisor
Gordon Woodside
Assistant Directors
Tom Willey
Annie Bradley
Casting
John Buchan
Screenplay
Tom Walmsley
Based on his novel
Continuity
Patricia Lambkin
Director of Photography
Barry Stone
Editor
Roushell Goldstein
Production Designer
Marian Wihack
Art Director
Bill Layton
Set Director
Patricia Cuccia
Set Dresser
Andris Molodecky
Scenic Artists
Valerie Kaelin
Lynn Simpson
Gabrielle Schnutgen
Costume Design
Ann Tree Newson
Make-up
Sandra Moore
Hair stylist
Lucy Orton
Title Design
Black Dog Design
Opticals
Film Opticals
of Canada

Music
John McCarthy
Additional Minter Songs
Rick Bortolotti
Music Performed by
Guitar:
Gerard Popma
Bass:
Patrick Kilbride
Drums:
John Bouvette
Vocals:
Leslie Stanwyck
Accordion:
John Lettieri
Piano:
Brian Dickinson
Trumpet:
Kevin Turcotte
Music Producer
John McCarthy
Sound Design
Manse James
Dialogue Editor
Peter Winninger
Production Sound Mixer
Erv Copestake
Foley/ADR Recordist
Christian Cooke
Re-recording Mixers
Frank Morrone
Dialogue Pre-Mix/
Recording Mixer
Frank Morrone
Foley Artist
Manse James

Cast
Leslie Hope
Lucy
Peter Outerbridge
Sloan
Victor Ertnanis
Michael
Dan Lett
William
Raoul Trujillo
Minter
Patricia Coccoiritti
Voice of Lucy's Mother

9,450 feet
105 minutes

Ultra stereo
In colour
Eastman colour

Good Friday. Writer Lucy Quick and her publisher husband Michael entertain a new author, Randall Sloan, and their friend William, Sloan's agent. The action is intercut with black-and-white flashbacks apparently telling the story of a relationship which took place in Paris at an earlier date, between a poet, Minter, and a woman whom Lucy describes as her friend. It appears that Minter, a friend of Lucy and Michael's, has since died of cancer. At the dinner party, Lucy catches Sloan rummaging through her underwear, and later she gives him the pair of silk panties he had tried to steal. The next day, Sloan arrives at Michael's office, and he and Lucy go to a cheap hotel and have sex.

Meanwhile, Michael has returned home, where he receives a mystery- ►

◀ous phone call which he believes is from John Lennon. When Lucy returns home, Michael has become obsessed with a parallel between his life and that of a hybrid Christ/Lennon figure, and imagines that he will die in three days. Sloan returns to William's apartment, where he is staying, and has sex with him too.

On Easter Sunday, Lucy is unable to perform at a reading of her work and is comforted by William. After a row with Michael, she returns to William's flat and plays sex games with Sloan, dressing up in Nazi-style bondage gear. Meanwhile, in Michael's office, Michael and William search for Minter's manuscript; by now it is clear that Minter is Lucy's fantasy lover, and together they are the subject of Lucy's new novel, as depicted in the flashbacks. Michael is fast disintegrating into a mass of delusions and madness, and when he collapses in the office, William kisses him.

Lucy, bored with the dominatrix role, reads to Sloan from her new novel, resolving the action by having Minter's lover (herself) take a razor to his throat. William returns unexpectedly and Lucy hides in the bedroom but reveals herself when she sees Sloan and William having sex. Lucy leaves and William, enraged by Sloan's betrayal, throws him out. Sloan goes to Lucy's flat, where she and the deluded Michael are attempting to have sex. Sloan has sex with them both, and Michael dies while being fucked by Sloan. Finally, a serene and empowered Lucy gazes out of her hotel window in Paris.

● The less said about this hysterical movie the better. It abounds with literary and artistic references,



Writer's block: Leslie Hope

starting with the title, taken, presumably, from the novel published in 1940 by Gertrude Stein, in which she mocks the behaviour of the Americans in Paris. The reference to Wenders' *Paris, Texas* is also unavoidable, and throughout it is as if the film-makers thought that simply by referring to these and other authors/composers/film-makers (Godard, Bulgakov, Lennon, Buñuel are all heavily present) their own film would thus be rendered more substantial. But the opposite effect is achieved, with every reference simply pointing up the deficiencies of the film in which they are embedded. The black and white flashback sequences are particularly offensive as Godard's *A bout de souffle* and Buñuel's *Belle de jour* are both plundered indiscriminately.

Mainstream movies which manage to capture the erotic are always wondrous anomalies. Genuinely erotic scenes may consist of only a look or a touch, as in *The Piano*, or in the fullest representation of love-making, as in *Don't Look Now*. But what is important is the sexual tension that is established between the characters, and here script and casting come into their own.

David Cronenberg once said that he expected his actors and actresses to "get it up for each other", the implication being that if they then chose to deliver a real sexual performance, then so much the better. He was talking about *Dead Ringers*, in which Genevieve Bujold and Jeremy Irons play out a bondage fantasy with the sort of evident pleasure which reassures the audience about the permissibility of their own fantasies. Porn movies have a different take altogether. Sexual tension is replaced by graphic sexual detail, which can itself be quite sustaining, at least arousing a natural curiosity about the sexual practice of others.

Paris France is neither one thing nor the other. Leslie Hope in Nazi bondage gear, shaving the pubic region of her shackled AC/DC lover, fails to convince when the full frontal shots are of resolutely flaccid penises. The blow jobs are discreetly hidden behind thighs and below waists, and the aggressive sexual energy of the main characters looks more like farce as the camera swings between scenes with a restless, directionless motion. In short, the erotic content is zero, and the pseudo-intellectual context will simply bewilder the dirty mac brigade who may provide the only audience for this ill-judged movie.

Canadian film has achieved something of a following in recent years, with directors such as Atom Egoyan and Denys Arcand leading a new wave out of the tax shelter years in the 80s. Both these directors have tackled the erotic with conviction and integrity and within a genuinely intellectual context. *Paris France* should not be confused with the contemporary Canadian cinema, which has struggled successfully to mobilise the vast Canadian government subsidy programmes to the cause of real film-making.

Jill McGreal

Renaissance Man

USA 1994

Director: Penny Marshall

Certificate
12
Distributor
Guild
Production Companies
Cinergi Pictures
Entertainment Inc/
Cinergi Production NV
Executive Producers
Penny Marshall
Buzz Feitshans
Producers
Sara Colleton
Elliot Abbott
Robert Greenhut
Co-producers
Timothy M. Bourne
Amy Lemisch
Production Co-ordinator
Melissa K. Cooper
Unit Production Manager
Timothy M. Bourne
Unit Managers
John B. Griffin Jr
Detroit:
Michelle Imperato
Location Managers
Robbie Goldstein
Jim Maceo
Post-production Supervisor
Bonnie Wells-Hlinomaz
Casting
Paula Herold
ADR Voices:
Barbara Harris
Assistant Directors
Sergio Mimica-Gezzan
K. C. Hadenfield
Sean Hobin
Nancy Blewer Mahaffey
Lucille OuYang
Screenplay
Jim Burnstein
Script Supervisor
Luca Koumellis
Director of Photography
Adam Greenberg
Camera Operators
M. Todd Henry
Tony Jannelli
Editors
George Bowers
Battle Davis
Additional:
Richard Candib
Richard Nord
Production Designer
Geoffrey Kirkland
Art Director
Richard Johnson
Art Department Co-ordinator
Shannon Rayle Bourne
Set Design
Robert Fechtman
Set Decorator
Jennifer Williams
Set Dressers
Mark Boucher
Mike Hanrahan
Lawrence Lira
Thom Magana
Philippe Rockholt
Matthew Sullivan
Special Effects
SP Effects Co:
Stan Parks
Costume Design
Betsy Heimann
Costume Supervisor
Nick Scarano
Make-up Artists
Key:
Christina Smith
Cynthia Barr-Bright
Key Hairstylist
Dione Taylor
Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title
Music
Hans Zimmer
Additional:
Nick Glennie-Smith
John Van Tongeren
Bruce Fowler
Orchestrations
Bruce Fowler
Nick Glennie-Smith
Music Supervisors
Randy Gerston
David Landau
Music Editor
Laura Perlman
Songs/Music Extracts
"Cantaloup (Flip Fantasia)" by Mel Simpson, Geoff Wilkinson, Rahsaan Kelly, Herbie Hancock, performed by US3;
"Listen To The Rain" by Stevie Nicks, Monroe Jones, Scott Crago, performed by Stevie Nicks; "Achy Breaky Heart" by Don Von Tress, performed by Mark Wahlberg; "Hamlet Rap (To Be Or Not To Be)" by Marky Mark, Mervyn Warren, performed by The Double D's; "Life In The Streets", "In Love", "United" by Frank Peterson, Alex Christensen, Mark Wahlberg, J. Paquette, performed by Pince Ital Joe Feat. Marky Mark; "R.O.C.K. In The USA" performed by John Cougar Mellencamp; "Washington Post March" performed by The 282nd Army Band; "The Army Song" performed by The US Army Band
Choreography
Donovan Henry
Supervising Sound Editor
George Anderson
Sound Editors
Rodger Pardee
Cindy Marty
Jeff Rosen
Dialogue Editors
David Kulezycki
Michael Haight
Scott Hecker
Terry Dorman
Supervising ADR Editor
Renee Tondelli
ADR Editors
Nick Korda
Michele Perrone
Foley Editors
Jonathan Klein
Chris Danelski
Julie Feiner
Carol Fleming
Production Mixer
Les Lazarowitz
Score Recordist
Bruce Botnick
Score Mixers
Jay Rifkin
Alan Meyerson
Re-recordists
Chris Jenkins
Scott Ganary
Mark Smith
Stunt Co-ordinator
M. James Arnett
"Henry V" Theatrical Production Unit
Directors:
Des McAnuff
Lisa Peterson
Producer:
Ben Donenberg

Set Designer:
John Arnone
Costume Designer:
Todd Roehman
Fight Co-ordinator:
Steve Rankin

Cast
Danny DeVito
Bill Rago
Gregory Hines
Sergeant Lou Cass
Cliff Robertson
Colonel James
James Remar
Captain Murdoch
Lillo Brancato Jr
Donnie Benitez
Stacey Dash
Miranda Myers
Kadeem Hardison
Jamaal Montgomery
Richard T. Jones
Jackson Leroy
Khalil Kain
Roosevelt Hobbs
Peter Simmons
Brian Davis
Greg Sporleder
Mel Melvin
Mark Wahlberg
Tommy Lee Haywood
Ben Wright
Private Oswald
Ed Begley Jr
Jack Markin
Ann Cusack
Bill's Secretary
Jeb Brown
Paul Abbott
Young Executives
Nat Mauldin
U Love To Rent Voice
Hakim Greenhut
Paper Boy Voice
Roy K. Dennison
Bum
Jennifer Lewis
Mrs Coleman
Alanna Ubach
Emily Rago
Matthew Keesler
Guard Gate MP
Gary Dewitt Marshall
Traffic MP
J. Leon Pridgen II
Captain Murdoch's Aide

J. J. Nettles
Bartender
Thomas D. Houck
Company Commander
Robert Head
Robert Steele
Yolanda Tisdale
Male Platoon Drill Sergeants
Julio Dominguez
Ronald Elder
Sheila Logan
Female Platoon Drill Sergeants
Kenneth McKee
José Ortiz
MPs
Laurence Irby
Officer
Belinda Fairley
Female Private
Christopher Baker
Sal Rendino
Laundry Privates
Gary T. McTague
Laundry Truck Driver
Alexander Zmijewski
Colonel James Aide
Isabella Hofmann
Marie
Samaria Graham
Shana Leroy
R. M. Haley
Florist
Daniel Bateman
Graduation Drill Sergeant
Alphonsa Smith
Graduation Sergeant Major
Jim Ochs
Customs Officer
Don Reilly
Henry V
Randy Hall
Henry V Lead Archer

11,542 feet
128 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor

● Advertising executive Bill Rago loses his job after a traffic jam prevents him from landing a vital \$6 million account. He then comes home to an answering machine full of irate messages from creditors plus a request from his daughter Emily to buy her a telescope and a plane ticket to Mexico so she can view a lunar eclipse.

Registering as unemployed, Rago is assigned a six-week job at the MacClane US Army Training Camp as teacher to eight recruits, whose lack of reading and writing skills mean that they are on the borderline of being rejected by the service. Nicknamed the 'Double Ds' ("Dumb as dogshit"), the class are a diverse ethnic and geographical mix: Hispanic Donnie Benitez, whites Brian Davis, Mel Melvin and Tommy Lee Haywood, and Afro-Americans Miranda Myers, Jackson Leroy, Roosevelt Hobbs and Jamaal Montgomery.

Rago has never taught before, but is touched by the bleak personal details revealed by his first class assignment. By chance having a copy of *Hamlet* with him, he decides to base future lessons on this text, getting his students to bang out a rhythm on their desks to accompany their recital of the blank verse. The class goes well, but Rago's relationship with Drill Sergeant Lou



Once more unto the breach: Danny DeVito

Cass – who thinks the lessons are a waste of time – becomes increasingly fractious. Benitez and Davis are late on parade and when Rago intervenes on their behalf, he and Cass almost come to blows.

Impressed by the incisive personality of Hobbs, Rago goes to commanding officer Colonel James to request that he be considered for officer training. Unfortunately, further research into Hobbs' background reveals him to be a fugitive crack dealer, and he is arrested and sent to jail. Rago loses the confidence of the class when he is late for a lesson, but regains it when he successfully joins them on the Victory Tower assault course. The class then perform a 'Hamlet Rap' song for him.

Pawning an advertising award to pay for Emily's telescope and airline ticket, Rago then accompanies his class to Canada to see a stage performance of *Henry V*. Rago prepares his pupils for a final examination, which will decide whether they can stay in the Army. Seeking out the records on the military service of Melvin's father, who was killed in Vietnam, Rago receives unofficial help from a woman staff sergeant, with whom he becomes friends. During night drill practice, Cass orders Benitez to recite some Shakespeare, hoping to humiliate him; Benitez responds impressively with the St Crispin's Day speech from *Henry V*.

Rago subjects his students to an oral exam, and deems them all to have passed. On graduation day, all eight recruits are part of the passing-out parade. Rago looks on proudly with his daughter, and Colonel James presents Melvin with the Silver Star medal his father won posthumously in the Vietnam War. James asks Rago if he is willing to take the next intake of recruits and the answer is a very cheerful yes.

One day, someone will make a movie about a nervous wreck of a teacher who finds his rebellious students impossible to handle and just gives up on them. *Renaissance Man*, though, follows the well-worn path of such classroom movies as *The Blackboard Jungle*, *To Sir With Love* and *Stand and Deliver*, in which a dedicated teacher inculcates a sense of self-esteem and achievement in his students and they go on to become useful members of society.

However, *Renaissance Man* is also an example of that well-populated sub-genre of the war film, the basic-training movie; it is also a Danny DeVito comedy vehicle; it has the discernible auteur dimension of a Penny Marshall film; and, more by default than design, it presents a fascinating picture of how far the exposed values of the American military have been rehabilitated by 90s Hollywood.

Basic training has been a natural subject for movie comedy from Chaplin onwards, and on that level, the film performs satisfactorily. DeVito's blustering style is well served, and many of his one-liners are excellent value, especially his succinct definition of stage drama – "You know, like TV without the box?"

As a Penny Marshall film, the movie can usefully be related to *A League of Their Own*. Similar values of team spirit, friendship and self-definition are celebrated, and DeVito's role here is similar to Tom Hanks' there: the initially reluctant instructor who comes both to admire and to be inspired by those he teaches. However, where that film had the benefit of a fresh subject and an immensely strong gallery of characters, *Renaissance Man* groans under its weight of clichés, character stereotypes and overall predictability – which brings us back to the film's status as a military movie made in the 90s.

The Pentagon applies very strict rules to those films it is prepared to support with hardware, personnel and base locations. Its regulations, which vitally include script approval, boil down to one demand: that the film present a positive image of the military. *Top Gun* was granted full support; *Apocalypse Now* was refused. Not surprisingly, *Renaissance Man* was afforded ample Pentagon help, for it wholeheartedly endorses a recruitment-advertisement view of military service.

Here, the US Army is one big happy family. Foul language, bullying, ritualised humiliation and violence of any sort are virtually non-existent here. The perfect demographic mix of white, Afro-American and Hispanic soldiers in Bill's class all have hard luck stories to tell about their experiences in civilian society, but once they have joined up and made the grade, those problems are solved. As Colonel James says in his Graduation Day speech, "the

future's looking bright both for you and your country".

Looking at *Renaissance Man*, it is not difficult to believe that M*A*S*H was made almost a quarter of a century ago. Throughout, the values of Marshall's film and those of the Army are seen to be one and the same. Military posters are repeatedly in shot, proclaiming such messages as "Victory starts here" and "Pain is temporary: Pride is forever". Alongside that hackneyed optimism, however, is just a hint of the frighteningly fragmented society these young people have escaped from. They have been failed by the education system, the economy and a disintegrating social structure, but the Army gives them something to belong to. Rago himself is divorced and has difficulty in relating to his daughter, while one of his students, in a rare scene outside the classroom, gets a letter from home about his violent stepfather.

However, these tantalising undercurrents are almost instantaneously swept aside by the movie's insistently positive message about self-worth and service in the US military being indissolubly linked. Quoting some of the best-known passages in Shakespeare allows the film to present the identity crises of Rago and his students as a triumph for that "happy few", the US Army. Rago's quotation, "This above all: to thine own self be true," and the Army poster which proclaims, "Be all you can be" are here interchangeable.

This is a startling throwback to the Cold War pro-military values of such early 50s basic-training potboilers as *Take the High Ground* and *Battle Cry*. Then, however, the enemy was obviously external, whereas now it seems that the biggest enemy is American social reality itself – something so frightening to contemplate that it has to be both drowned in sentimentality and smothered by symmetrical plotting before it has a chance to draw breath.

The film also mawkishly sets about healing the wounds of Vietnam. Rago tells Colonel James that his only previous military experience was protesting against the War; by the film's conclusion, he has literally got with the programme and become a team player. Then there is that achingly contrived presentation of a father's medal to a son, who is seen to be following in the same great tradition.

Mel Gibson's recent *The Man Without a Face* had a child being taught Shakespeare so he could escape his dysfunctional family and go to military academy – and it was actually set at the height of the Vietnam War in 1968! *Renaissance Man* is even more mind-boggling in its use of the Bard. Hesitantly gesturing with one hand back to the searing Civvy Street despair of films such as *Boyz n the Hood*, it uses the other to hitch a ride on Shakespeare's silver wings to an idealised military community that is as far removed from that dangerous world as the Land of Oz is from Kansas.

Tom Tunney

3-4x Jugatsu (San tai Yon x Jugatsu) (Boiling Point)

Japan 1990

Director: Takeshi Kitano

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

ICA Projects

Production Companies

Yamada Right Vision
A Bandai/Shochiku-Fuji
Presentation

Executive Producer

Kazuyoshi Okuyama

Line Producers

Hisao Nabeshima
Masayuki Mori
Takio Yoshida

Production Manager

Masayuki Kaihara

Assistant Directors

Toshihiro Tenma
Takeshi Yoshikawa

Screenplay

Takeshi Kitano

Director of Photography

Katsumi Yanagishima

Editor

Toshio Taniguchi

Art Director

Osamu Sasaki

Special Effects

Hisao Natoki
Yuichi Karasawa
Kenichi Imazeki
Akio Igi

Wardrobe

Kenji Kawasaki
Kaoru Kubota

Make-up

Yoshie Hamada
Mayumi Seo
Yuko Okuda

Sound Recordist

Senji Horiuchi

Sound Re-recordists

Mitsuki Yamaguchi

Sound Effects

Yukio Hokari

Cast

Masahiko Ono
Masaki
Yuriko Ishida
Sayaka
Takahito Iguchi
Takashi Iguchi
Minoru Iizuka
Kazuo
Makoto Ashikawa
Akira
Hitoshi Ozawa
Kanai
Hisashi Igawa
Otomo, the gang boss
Bengal
Muto
Takahiko Aoki
Saburo
Hiroshi Suzuki
Takuya
Kenzo Matsuo
Naoya

Hiroshi Ide

Hajime

Tsuneo Serizawa

Makoto

Johnny Okura

Minamizaka

Katsuo Torashiki

Tamagi

Erifuse

Sumiyo

"Beat" Takeshi (Takeshi Kitano)

Uehara

Shinobu Tsuruta

Petrol Station Boss

Koichi Akiyama

Petrol Pump Attendant

Naotaka Hanai

Rich Kid on Motorcycle

Jennifer Baer

Woman on Beach

Ronny Santana

GI in Okinawa

Meijin Serizawa

Etsushi Toyokawa

Shoichiro Sakata

Ryosuke Fukami

Kazushi Tao

Kazuma Mori

Kenichiro Tamayori

Hiroshi Matsuka

Kanamaru Maeda

Takahito Yamamoto

Katsuya Tadokoro

Yuka Yamashita

Miki Yazawa

Keiji Fujita

Takaki Nishimura

Ryuichi Kanda

Masashi Sato

Tokio Seki

Kengakusha Akiyama

Makoto Tsugawa

Hitoshi Kawaguchi

Osamu Nakajima

Seiichi Hirose

Mitsutoshi Shirohani

Naoki Hitomi

Shuji Nakachi

Masashi Nakajima

Takao Toji

Hitomihika

Tomiko Kawakami

Takao Serizawa

Momoki Sato

Kanako Uemura

Yasuhiro Takeuchi

Tomonori Machida

Chigako Aizawa

Members of the Charmant

and Artis Baseball Teams

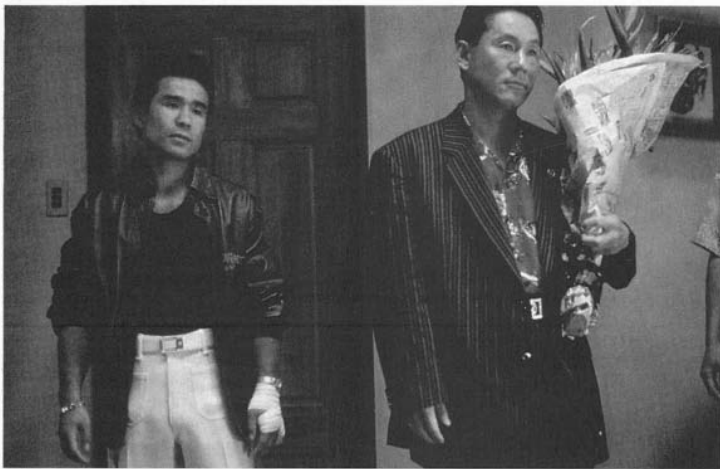
8,640 feet

96 minutes

In colour

Subtitles

An incompetent, unenthusiastic player with amateur baseball team The Eagles, Masaki works as a petrol pump attendant in suburban Tokyo. One day *yakuza* customer Kanai from the Otomo gang unjustly picks on him, and Masaki courts disaster for the business by hitting him back. Kanai's boss Muto visits the garage to demand compensation. Masaki meanwhile turns for help to Takashi Iguchi, The Eagles' team manager, owner of a small bar and himself a former *yakuza*. Iguchi visits the Otomo gang office ►



Major league: Katsuo Torashiki, Takeshi Kitano

◀ to intercede for the garage, but is humiliated by Muto; later he ambushes Muto and beats him up. Iguchi then makes trouble at a *pachinko* parlour controlled by the Otomo gang, and is reciprocally beaten up by Kanai and others.

Masaki concludes that he needs a gun to stand up for himself, and flies to Okinawa to look for one; his friend and Eagles team-mate Kazuo tags along. They soon run into two local *yakuza*, Uehara and his loyal sidekick Tamagi, who are themselves in trouble over the repayment of a debt to Minamizaka and his strangely androgynous boss. They spend time eating, drinking, singing *karaoké* and playing on the beach with Uehara, both disturbed and impressed by his evident bisexuality and his capacity for misogyny and violence. Uehara negotiates a deal for a cache of firearms from a US military base, and shoots the GI who delivers it; he takes the machine guns he needs for himself and leaves the rest to the kids from Tokyo. Uehara and Tamagi succeed in killing Minamizaka and his boss, but are themselves wiped out just after seeing off Masaki and Kazuo.

Back in Tokyo, Masaki hears that Iguchi has disappeared. He checks out the Otomo headquarters with Kazuo and their team-mate Akira, who are caught in the act and severely beaten up. Unscathed, Masaki reports to the filling station that night and (with the aid of Sayaka, the Eagles' only girl supporter) steals an unattended petrol tanker from the forecourt. They drive to the Otomo office, and crash the vehicle into it, causing a huge explosion. Cheered up by this dream of 'heroism', Masaki emerges from the toilet on the sports ground and jogs back to the diamond where The Eagles are playing their latest friendly match.

● The Japanese title of 'Beat' Takeshi Kitano's second film as director is an imaginary baseball scoreline, which records a last-minute victory for the away team in October, the month of the film's first release. This title says a lot. It establishes the film's central baseball metaphor (to be or not to be a team player?), it announces Kitano's perennial sympathy for underdogs, it defiantly predicts success for the film in the Japanese market, and it

shouts idiosyncrasy. It's worse than a pity that the film is stuck with an inane and unresonant English title.

Kitano evidently thought of this as his first personal film (he was initially hired only to star in *Violent Cop*, and reworked the project when the intended director had to drop out) and loaded it with cinematic and thematic ideas all his own: everything from jump-cuts as visual punchlines to a breathtakingly extreme vision of the 'wildness' and 'craziness' of the Okinawan *yakuza* he plays himself. The simplest objective description of the film indicates how far apart from mainstream norms it chooses to stand: it's a movie without music and conventional linking scenes, about a clash between a scrawny, truly unprepossessing kid and a low-ranking *yakuza*, that veers off without warning into a lengthy interlude in Okinawa. Most Japanese critics in 1990 wrote the film off as a curious failure, and Kitano himself now looks back on it somewhat ruefully: "I put a huge amount of energy and thought into it, but I was never that happy at the way it came out. I feel about it much as a parent would feel about a handicapped child: a mixture of deep love and great regret". For anyone interested in Kitano's career, though, *3-4x Jugatsu* is very obviously a first shot at the forms and themes of *A Scene at the Sea* and *Sonatine*, and its off-the-wall approach to character, plotting and incident calls for celebration more than regret.

The core of the film is actually the seeming digression of the interlude in Okinawa, entered via a jump cut from Masaki sitting in a suburban cafe to Masaki walking on a tropical beach, and exited via a hilarious sequence that demonstrates exactly how to get a rucksack full of guns through airport security. Masaki's decision to go looking for a gun is only his second decisive action (the first was thumping Kanai at the garage, as much a protest against the garage manager's servile apologies as a retaliation against Kanai's blows); but his encounter with Uehara teaches him there is more to life and death than merely being decisive. Hanging out with Uehara, his long-suffering buddy Tamagi and his even more long-suffering girlfriend Sumiyo, gives Masaki a crash course in irrationality,

bisexuality, risk-taking and living for the moment; these lessons are reinforced by all the differences between uptight, conformist Tokyo and laid-back Okinawa, differences that inform the film's light and framing as much as its storytelling, looking forward directly to the visual strategies of *Sonatine*.

Very much like the images of sunflowers on the beach that close *Sonatine*, which implicitly call into question the 'reality' of the incidents we have seen, the coda here suggests that at least some of the film should be taken as Masaki's daydream while sitting in the dark of the toilet hut on the playing field. The moral of this daydream is, as Kitano has pointed out in interviews: "You have to learn to swing the bat if you want to hit the ball". But the larger lesson of the Okinawan interlude also holds good: it takes decisive action plus irrationality to really shake things up. Masaki dreams of a kamikaze attack on the Otomo gang, driving a petrol tanker into their headquarters, and this suicide mission is both a hyperbolic revenge and an absurd revindication of an otherwise insignificant life. In terms of the film's governing baseball metaphor, Masaki imagines himself striking a home run that justifies himself and at the same time confirms him as a viable team player; its only drawback is that it entails the striker's death.

Kitano has had the wit to pepper this conundrum with a wonderful gallery of eccentric characters and incidents that reflect the disorderly underside of orderly Japan. The characters range from the over-frank fisherman - a stranger on a train - who starts asking Masaki and his date about their sex lives, to the obnoxious rich kid with dyed hair who gets his mother to buy him a motorcycle that's beyond his league. And the incidents range from Iguchi's furious ejection of would-be sophisticated customers from his small bar to the extraordinary moment when Uehara, aroused by the sight of Tamagi and Sumiyo making love, stops groping the hapless Kazuo and flings himself on to the bed - to sodomise Tamagi. A lot of this is wildly funny, as are the close-ups of people reacting to off-screen or out-of-frame action, but nobody would call *3-4x Jugatsu* a comedy. The film's vignettes, whether central or peripheral, add up to a panorama of social inequalities and injustices, providing a convincing context for Masaki's lifetime record of underachievement, and the humour is merely Kitano's characteristic way of finessing his underlying anger.

Formally inventive, profligate with visual and dramatic ideas, and always giving the sense that it has more creative horsepower under its bonnet than it needs to use, this film is a delight. It's in no way a masterpiece, but it will probably turn out to have been the prototype for much of Takeshi Kitano's cinema, and that cinema is already accomplished enough to make this required viewing.

Tony Rayns

The Sandlot Kids

USA 1993

Director: David Mickey Evans

Certificate PG	Art Department Co-ordinator Erin E. Mattes
Distributor 20th Century Fox	Set Decorator Judi Sandin
Production Company 20th Century Fox	Set Dresser Lisa Eager
In association with Island World	Lead Scenic Artist Jim Passanante
Executive Producers Mark Burg	Special Effects Clifford Wenger
Chris Zarpas	Costume Design Grania Preston
Cathleen Summers	Costume Supervisor Lynda Foote
Producers Dale de la Torre	Key Make-up Artists Karl Wessen
William S. Gilmore	Shannon Engemann
Associate Producer Robert Gunter	Key Hairstylists Leslie Anne Anderson
Production Associates Joseph Watts	Mindi Craig Wagner
David Smith	Title Design Douy Swofford
Steven Rosenberg	Titles/Opticals Howard A. Anderson
Brian Maddalena	Co
Michelle Rosenblatt	Music David Newman
Production Co-ordinator Debbie Austin	Music Consultants Bonnie Greenberg
Unit Production Manager Frederic W. Brost	Jill Meyers
Location Manager Dennis Williams	Music Editor Laurie Higgins-Tobias
Post-production Supervisor Dan Genetti	Songs "Finger Poppin' Time"
2nd Unit Director John Moio	by and performed by Hank Ballard; "Smokie Pt 2" by Bill Black,
Assistant Directors William M. Elvin	performed by Bill Black's Combo; "There Goes My Baby" by Jerry Leiber, Mike Stoller,
Alan Edmisten	Benjamin Nelson,
Grant Gilmore	Lover Patterson, George Treadwell, "This Magic Moment" by Doc
2nd Unit: Alan Edmisten	Pomus, Mort Shuman,
Molly Mayeux	performed by The Drifters; "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" by
Paul Spadone	George David Weiss,
Casting Shari Rhodes	Luigi Creatore, Hugo Peretti, performed by The Tokens;
Associate: Joseph Middleton	"America The Beautiful" arranged and performed by Ray Charles; "Green Onions" by Al Jackson Jnr, Booker T. Jones,
Location: Tanya Sullivan	Lewis Steinberg, Steve Cropper, performed by Booker T & The MGs;
Screenplay David Mickey Evans	"Tequila" by Chuck Rio, performed by The Champs; "Wipe Out"
Robert Gunter	by Robert Berryhill,
Script Supervisor Becca Poulos	Jim Fuller, Ron Wilson,
Director of Photography Anthony B. Richmond	Patrick Connolly,
2nd Unit Director of Photography Mike Ferris	performed by The Surfaris
Camera Operator Rory R. Knepp	Supervising Sound Editor Paul Clay
Steadicam Operator Rick Tiedemann	Supervising Dialogue Editors Mike Szakmeister
Visual Effects Supervisor Richard Yurich	Ed Barton
Visual Effects Computer Film Co:	Carin Rogers
Stuart McAra	Marty Stein
Janet Yale	Supervising ADR Editor Pat Somerset
Mark Nemes	Production Sound Mixer Garry Cunningham
Digital Effects Consultant Michael Muscal	Sound Records Douglas Kearns
Digital Film Opticals Digital Magic	Tom Steel
Vision Magic Process	ADR Recordist Dean St John
Jeff Beaulieu	Recording Mixer Tim Boyle
Adam Howard	ADR Mixer J. R. Weston
Beast Creature Effects Rick Lazzarini's	Foley Mixer Marilyn Graf
Character Shop:	Re-recording Mixers Patrick K. Cycone
Fred Cervantes	Robert Thirwell
James Clark	
Matt Croteau	
David Fedele	
Jeff Himmel	
Lynnette Johnson	
John Lundberg	
Douglas Noe	
Mich'l Rios	
Jonathan Spence	
Mark Tavares	
Stephanie Wise	
Editor Michael A. Stevenson	
Production Designer Chester Kaczinski	
Art Director Marc Dabe	

Sound Effects Editors

Susan Kurtz
Dan Thomas
Cameron Frankley

Foley Artists
Ellen Heuer
Chris Moriana

Baseball Technical Adviser
Garret Pearson

Stunt Co-ordinator
John Moio

Beast Puppeteers
Brian Simpson
Mark N. Weatherbe
Cleve Hall

Cast

Tom Guiry
Scotty Smalls

Mike Vitar
Benjamin Franklin
Rodriguez

Patrick Renna
Hamilton "Ham" Porter

Chauncey Leopardi
Michael "Squints"
Palledorous

Marty York
Alan "Yeah-Yeah"
McClennan

Brandon Adams
Kenny DeNunez

Grant Gelt
Bertram Grover Weeks

Shane Obedzinski
Tommy "Repeat"
Timmons

Victor DiMattia
Timmy Timmons

Art La Fleur
"The Babe"

Denis Leary
Bill

Karen Allen
Mom

James Earl Jones
Mr Mertle

Marlee Shelton

Wendy
Herb Muller
Young Mr Mertle

Garret Pearson
Police Chief

Ed Mathews
Keith Campbell
Thieves

Will Horneff
Phillips

Tyson Jones
Little League Punk #2

Karl Simmons
Schoolyard Pitcher

Mauri Wills
Coach

Pablo P. Vitar
Older Benny

Bob Apisa
Home Plate Umpire

Robbie T. Robinson
Third-Base Umpire

Chuck Fick
Giants Catcher

Tim Page
Giants Pitcher

Dennis Williams
Giants Third Baseman

Cynthia Windham
Mother at Pool

Shane Lavar Smith
Toddler

9,089 feet
101 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Anamorphic

US title:
The Sandlot

● Salt Lake City, 1962. Eleven-year-old Scotty moves to a new neighbourhood with his mother and new stepfather Bill. Bill's study is a shrine to work and to baseball, with a ball signed by Babe Ruth as its centrepiece. Feeling unwanted, Scotty stumbles on eight boys playing a game of baseball in a sandlot. Reluctantly joining in, he plays dreadfully. His mother encourages him to make friends and have fun. Back at the sandlot, Benny, the boys' best player, engineers a catch for Scotty, and gives him his old equipment. Scotty is in the team.

The boys play baseball every day until a ball is hit out of the sandlot into the neighbouring yard. Innocently going to retrieve it, Scotty is dragged back by the others. That night, he is told the legend of The Beast, a monstrous guard dog chained up in the yard 20 years before by its owner, the bad-tempered Mr Mertle. In the dark, Scotty glimpses the monster.

Later that summer, one of the boys, 'Squints', wins a kiss from Wendy, the lifeguard he adores, by pretending to drown, and the gang beat a team of snooty Little Leaguers. One day, Benny hits a ball so hard it explodes, and the boys consider it an omen. Bill leaves on a business trip and, when a ball is lost, Scotty replaces it with Bill's signed one. He hits his first home run – straight into the yard. The boys try various schemes to retrieve it, but The Beast outwits them. That night Benny dreams that he is visited by the ghost of Babe Ruth, who tells him that taking the ball from The Beast is his chance of greatness. Next morning, Benny walks into the yard, watched by the others, and sees a normal-sized

dog. He grabs the ball and, as he is chased, the fence falls onto the dog. Benny and Scotty rescue him, and are invited in by Mr Mertle, a blind man who replaces their battered ball with one signed by The Babe's whole team. Mertle, it turns out, was a great player, too. Years later, Scotty commentates as Benny plays for the Giants.

● At its worst, David Mickey Evans' directorial debut is like *Stand by Me* diluted with an irritating dash of *The Wonder Years*. Sharing details with Rob Reiner's film – a falsely mythical backyard dog, 12-year-old male bonding and a central friendship between an egghead and a tough kid – it also persists with the baby-boomer dream that the early 60s were a last golden glow of American adolescence. So *The Sandlot Kids* is narrated by the grown-up Scotty in a smugly wise voice, even though the only wisdom he appears to have gained in 30 years is that baseball is cool. It is an innocent truth which a worried America, with its recent fervour for children's and baseball films, seems determined to believe. Niggling historical complications have no place in such a film, allowing James Earl Jones' ageing black baseball player to reminisce on his rivalry with Babe Ruth, without once mentioning segregated leagues. The only hint of historical distance comes with the break-up of the gang narrated as a parody of *American Graffiti* (the kids grow up not to Vietnam, but to fortunes in mini-malls and bungee-jumping).

Where *The Sandlot Kids* scores is in its children. Scotty, the writer-surrogate swot, may grow up to be annoying, but at least as a child he avoids the solipsism of other recent smart kids – in *This Boy's Life* and *King of the Hill*, for example. Instead, he moves from his distant father to a welcoming gang with minimal angst, allowing the film to simply celebrate the pleasures of boyhood. The other kids are a delight, with unforced wit and natural charm.

As director and co-writer, Evans himself comes across as curiously child-like. At its most damaging, this allows the dwindling narrative cohesion favoured by bored ten-year-olds. But Evans also seems capable of an inclusive wonderment beyond his guff-spouting narrator. In a single film, he includes a scene of powerful and funny adolescent attraction and a rousing moment of adult sporting triumph. And in a single scene, as Benny escapes the not very scary dog, Evans throws in a cinema screening of *The Wolf Man* and *The Surfari's* "Wipeout", just because he can – a sense of freedom which spills into bursting frames and gratuitous wipes. It is an ignorance of formula constantly felt, as reality stretches and contracts with the force of the boys' imaginations. All that prevents the film's total success is the suspicion that its inconsistency comes in part from having nothing to say. It leaves the odd impression of not only starring 12-year-olds, but being made by one.

Nick Hasted

Sirens

Australia/United Kingdom 1994

Director: John Duigan

Certificate

15

Distributor

Buena Vista
International
Production Company
WMGFilm
GmbH/Australian Film
Finance Corp Pty
Ltd/British Screen
Finance Ltd/Samson
Productions Two Pty
Ltd/Sarah Radclyffe
Productions –

Music

Rachel Portman
Music Co-ordinator
Christine Woodruff
Sound Editors
Susan Midgley
Alan Bell
Sound Recordist
David Lee
Re-recording Mixers
Dean Humphreys
Tim Cavagin

Cast

Hugh Grant
Anthony Campion
Tara Fitzgerald
Estella Campion
Sam Neill
Norman Lindsay
Elle MacPherson
Sheela
Portia De Rossi
Giddy
Kate Fischer
Pru
Pamela Rabe
Rose Lindsay
Ben Mendelsohn
Lewis
John Polson
Tom
Mark Gerber
Devlin
Julia Stone
Jane
Ellie MacCarthy
Honey
Vincent Ball
Bishop of Sydney
John Duigan
Earnest Minister
Lexy Murphy
British Bulldog Girl
Scott Lowe
Station Master
Bryan Davies
Barman
Lynne Emanuel
Barmaid
Kitty Silver
Carolyn Devlin
Pub Women
Peter Campbell
Pub Drunk

8,521 feet

95 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Editor

Humphrey Dixon

Production Designer

Roger Ford

Art Director

Laurie Faen

Set Decorator

Kerrie Brown

Original Paintings

Paul Delprat

Watercolours

Ena Joyce

Oil Copies

Eric Todd

Costume Design

Terry Ryan

Costume Co-ordinator

Mel Dykes

Costume

Tony Phillips

Make-up Artists

Noriko Watanabe

Elaine Fitcher

Hairstylist

Jan Zeigenbein

Titles/Opticals

GSE

● Anthony Campion, a young vicar newly arrived from England, and his wife Estella are taken by the Bishop of Sydney around an exhibition of Australian artists. Included is Norman Lindsay's painting of a naked woman on a cross, which has offended the church. The Bishop asks Campion to visit Lindsay on his distant estate and persuade him to substitute another picture for the exhibition.

Lindsay's bohemian household is inhabited by his wife Rose, his two daughters and his three models, Pru, Sheela and Giddy. After a boisterous dinner, during which Lindsay refuses to change his paintings, the models dress up as fairies for the little girls. The next morning, Sheela invites Estella for a swim. Shocked by Pru and Sheela's nudity and by the appearance of the odd-job man, Devlin – almost blind as the result of a boxing match – Estella runs back to the house. Because of a derailed train, Estella and Anthony have to stay longer. That night Estella – unaware that Lindsay is watching her – spies on Pru and Sheela playing strip poker with two men. At a picnic, Pru and Sheela tease Giddy because she fancies Devlin. Out walking, Estella sees Devlin, naked and about to masturbate. His dog barks and she runs off, terrified. She is rescued by the three models, who dress her up and take her to town for a drunken afternoon where they encounter the disapproval of the local people. A flustered Anthony sees them all tickling and stroking Giddy. Estella is tied to a tree by the others, and has to call Devlin to untie her. Back at the house, Anthony is angry with her, and they row.

In church, Estella imagines herself naked in front of everyone. Giddy has decided to sleep with Devlin that night. But she is so drunk that she falls asleep. After sex with Anthony, Estella creeps into Lindsay's studio where Devlin is waiting, and they make love. At dinner the next day, Devlin takes her hand under the table. When Giddy starts accusing Pru and Sheela of having slept with her man, Estella runs from the table. Anthony follows her and his kindness wins her over. She goes to Giddy that night, gives her her wedding ring "for luck", and tells her to go to Devlin. In a dream-like state she wanders down to the lake and lies in it, caressed by the hands of the three women. Giddy wakes her up in bed, delighted. Anthony is outraged because Lindsay has painted Estella's dream into a picture. But Estella is complimentary. Anthony tells her that the church has given in over the paintings. On the train home, Estella coyly starts tickling Anthony with her foot. On a ridge on the Blue Mountains, Pru, Sheela, Giddy, Rose and Estella, naked, sway mystically.

● Anyone expecting the sharply observational adolescent comedy of John Duigan's *The Year My Voice Broke* and *Flirting* is in for a surprise. For though sex is again pretty much the main preoccupation of the characters, there is little of the wry, sympa- ►



A girl's own adventure: Tara Fitzgerald

◀thetic humour of Duigan's earlier films. Instead, he has decided to celebrate the liberation of mind and body, as uptight, English Estella gives in to her passions in a sunny, bohemian Australian household.

The Piano has shown how sexy a film about repression and seduction can be; in *Sirens*, the theme is faintly ludicrous. This would be fine if the subject were treated in a matchingly ludicrous spirit, but Duigan appears to have taken it completely seriously. So when we want to laugh at the tinkly, almost soft-focus scenes of the women tickling and stroking each other, or the final image of them standing on the rocks and 'becoming one' with nature, or even the Lady Chatterley-style seduction of Estella by the extra-virile, blind odd-job man Devlin - all clenched hands and heaving passion - it is for the wrong reasons.

Not that there is no potential here - particularly when the film concentrates on Estella's repressed sexuality rather than on her liberation. Her dreams of nakedness in holy places and nude female statues coming to life have an engaging hyper-reality. A true spy in the house of love, she is endlessly peeping at sexual activity from a distance before running away from it. And looking (or not looking) provides quite a powerful cental motif. Lindsay sees Estella spying, Giddy spies on Devlin and Estella making love (although she does not recognise Estella), while Anthony can only bear to spy briefly on his wife frolicking with the models, or to catch a glimpse of Giddy (to whom he is secretly attracted) modelling naked for Lindsay. Devlin's blindness means that he cannot look at Estella (and, by implication, her guilt) as she betrays her husband with him.

There is also something imposingly larger than life about the film. The world outside the house is made up of some crudely engaging caricatures.

Inside it, the statuesque Sheela emanates a lazy, flirting sensuality that thrusts itself perceptibly into Estella's consciousness. And the Lindsay household reverberates with the noise of endless arguments about philosophy, religion, socialism, women's rights and art - so much so, in fact, that when distinctly anachronistic phrases such as "negative images" creep into the conversation, the impression is that Duigan is really taking time off to explore a few more of his own preoccupations in a rambling, European film style.

The film is laden with symbols and visual metaphors - snakes slithering about; rose petals dropping in slow motion on the sleeping Estella's face; the endless Australian disasters that she reads about in the newspapers; the wild animals that seem quite at home in this house of animal passions. These could help to work this either into a lavish fantasy, or into a campy outrageous romp. But the film does not quite have the courage to go for one or the other and tends, instead, to fall limpy between the two.

It is only Hugh Grant who gives *Sirens* a dose of what it needs. Taking his cue from his role in Roman Polanski's recent *Bitter Moon* - a potentially pretentious drama that opted instead for entertainingly bizarre humour - Grant plays another ridiculous Englishman abroad. This time, he is a naïf who thinks himself 'progressive', but the impact is much the same. Ever apologising, or bashfully averting his gaze from the naked women draped around the place, trying to make cheerful conversation, or clumsily attempting to make love to his wife, the Pooh half of the Campions' self-styled 'Pooh and Piglet' duo is a riot. It's just a shame that no-one else rises to it - and that, rather like Lindsay's paintings, the film is never more than boisterously and earnestly twee.

Amanda Lipman

Thumbelina

USA/Eire 1994

Director: Don Bluth, Gary Goldman

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Warner Bros.

Production Companies

Warner Bros./
Don Bluth Ltd/
Don Bluth Ireland Ltd

Producers

Don Bluth
Gary Goldman
John Pomeroy

Associate Producers

Russell Boland
Post-production:
Helene Blitz

Production Supervisors

Cathy Goldman
Olga Tarin-Craig

Production Manager

Gerry Shirren

Screenplay

Don Bluth

Optical Effects

Don Bluth Ireland Ltd

Pre-production Colour

Stylist

Carmen Oliver

Layout Supervisor

Eddie Gribbin

Layout Artists

Fred Reilly
Amy Berenz

Dean Deblais
Gary O'Neill

Mark T. Byrne
John Byrne

Martin Hanley
Peter Yamasaki

Ken Spiriduso
Jonathan Ridge

Eoghan Cahill

Conceptual Colour Keys

Suzanne Lemieux

Background Supervisor

Rick Benham

Background Artists

Carl Jones

Robyn Christian Nason

Paul M. Kelly

Phaedra Craig Finnegan

Kenneth Slevin

Supervising Directing

Animator

John Pomeroy

Directing Animators

John Hill

Richard Bazley

Jean Morel

Len Simon

Piet Dreycker

Dave Kupczyk

Sequence Animation

Directors

Cathy Jones

Ralf Palmer

Character Animators

Nasson Vakalis

John Power

Kevin Johnson

Bill Waldman

Marcelo Moura

Chris Derochie

Oliver Wade

Tom Steisinger

Frank Gabriel

Robert Fox

Sam Fleming

Paul J. Kelly

Sandro Cleuzo

Silvia Hoefnagels

Shane Zalvin

Edison Goncalves

Ben Burgess

Paul Newberry

Troy Saliba

Rusty Stoll

Sung Kwon

Jackie Corley

Robert Jurgen Sprathoff

Konrad Winterlich

Special Effects Supervisor

Dave Tidgwell

L.A. Special Effects

Supervising Animator

Tom Hush

Special Effects Directing

Animators

Joseph Gilland

Peter Matheson

Diann Landau

Special Effects Animators

Brian McSweeney

Janette Owens

Joan Doyle

Leslie Aust

Robert B. Cowan

Orla Madden

Declan Walsh

Mark Cumberston

Conor Thunder

Noel P. Kiernan

Conán Fitzpatrick

Martine Finucane

L.A. Special Effects

Animators

Debra Middleton-

Kupczyk

Bruce Heller

Michel Gagné

Director of Computer

Animation and Digital

Imagery

Jan Carlée

Senior Computer Animator

Greg Maguire

Computer Animator

Thomas Miller

Computer Technical Director

Christine Zing Chang

Production Continuity

Supervisor

Carla Washburn

Animation Film Editor

Fiona Trayler

Supervising Artists

Tom Higgins

Eileen Conway

Jan Naylor

Scene Planning Supervisor

John Phelan

Scene Planners

Gerard Carty

Séan Dempsey

Eiméar Clonan

Maureen Buggy Vincent

Clarke

Philip Grogan

Animation Checking

Supervisors

Michele McKenna-

Mahon

Christine Fluskey

Supervising Colour Stylist

Violet McKenna

Colour Stylist

Suzanne O'Reilly

Journeyman Colour Stylists

Donal Freeney

Ailish Mullally

Colour Stylists

Majella Burns

Anne McCormick

Mary Cuthbert

Lyn Mulvany

Berenice Keegan

Supervising Colour Special

Effects Artist

Shirley (Sam) Mapes

Final Checking Supervisor

Mary Walsh

Final Check Trainer

Mary Shevlin

Final Check Co-ordinator

Sandra Breslin

Final Checkers

Martina McCarron

Sinéad Murray

Fiona Mackie

Pearse Love

Melanie Strickland

Susan O'Loughlin

Brian Forsyth

Dympna Murray

Production Camera

Supervisor

Ciarán Morris

Animation Camera

Operators

Emmet Doyle

Paddy Duffy

Gary Hall

Jeanette Maher

Keith Murray

John O'Flaherty

Peadar O'Reilly

Derek Reid

Inking Supervisor

Jacqueline Hooks

Cel Painting Supervisor

Niamh McClean

Additional Character

Animators

Bill Giggie

Gary Perkovic

Celine Kierna

Fernando Moro

Rogério Marques

Degodoy

Alain Costa

Valentin Domenech

Stefan Fjeldmark

Dermot O'Connor

Donnacha Daly

Kevin O'Neill

Joe McDonough

Linda Miller

Mark Fisher

Chad Stewart

Jacques Muller

Matthew Bates

Alan Fleming

Additional Background

Painters

Greg Gibbons

Sunny Apinchapong

Tia Kratter

Kevin McNamara

Miguel Gil

Michael Hirsh

Rachel Kerr

Sean Sullivan

Bill Dely

Layout Co-ordinator

Cormac Slevin

Blue Sketch Artists

Gari Downey

Sorcha Ní Chimín

Paste Up Artist

Gillian Bolger

Key Clean-Up Artists

Finuala Ballance

Sheila Brown

Michael Carey

Mick Cassidy

Roland Chat

Chris Chu

Wesley Chun

Mary Connors

Nollaig Crombie

Finula Cunningham

Peter Donnelly

Martin Byrnes

Des Forde

Gerard Gogan

Jason Halpin

Sue Houghton

Ethan Nate Kanfer

Helen Lawlor

Karen Marjoribanks

Ciara McCabe

Glen McIntosh

Margaret McKenna

Anne-Marie Mockler

Annette Morel

Eileen Ridgeway

Bonnie Robinson

Richard Smitheman

Sally Voorheis

Chan Woo Jung

Miri Yoon

Character Clean Up Artists

Rosie Ahern

Tommy Brennan

Scott Brutz

John Cooley

Shana Curley

Dan Daly

Eileen

Nguyen Phi Anh
 Nguyen Quoc Hung
 Nguyen Thanh Quoc
 Thanh
 Nguyen The Manh
 Nguyen Thi Minh Thu
 Nguyen Thi Ngoc Bich
 Nguyen Thi Ngoc Diep
 Nguyen Thi Ngoc Lan
 Nguyen Thi Phuong
 Thao
 Nguyen Thi Thu Thuy
 Nguyen Thi Tu Anh
 Nguyen Tien Dung
 Andrea Pancsak
 Erika Patyi
 Pham Ngoc Nga
 Pham Thi My Ngoc
 Peter Saska
 Niko Seres
 Attila Sipos
 Lajos Szabo
 Palma Szomolnok
 Gizella Szoradiné Gonda
 Gyula Tar
 Thanh Le Giang
 To Anh Tai
 Tran Thi Hai
 Tran Thi Huong
 Tran Thi Huong
 Tran Thi Phi Nga
 Monika Treiber
 Troung Cong Hai
 Truong Thanh Truc
 Vo Ngoc Ling
 Vo Thi My Dung
Supervising Editor
 Thomas V. Moss
Production Designer
 Rowland Wilson
Art Director
 Barry Atkinson
Storyboard Artists
 Scott Caple
 Guy Deel
 James Finnegan
 Bill Frake
 Kevin Gollaher
 Keith Ingham
 Rob Koo
 Brad Raymond
 Rick Saliba
 Mark Swan
Special Effects
 Michael Casey
Live Action Reference Models
 Thumbelina:
 Angeline Ball
 Penny Dormer
 Prince Cornelius:
 Chris Derochie
 Mr Beetle:
 Kevin Gollaher
 Ms Fieldmouse:
 Brona Gallagher
 Queen Tabitha:
 Moya Mackle
 King Colbert:
 Rowland Wilson
 Mother:
 Sam Mapes
 Pat Leavy
Make-up Supervisor
 Maria Farrell
Title Graphics
 Don Bluth Ireland
 Limited
Underscore
 William Ross
 Barry Manilow
Supervising Composer
 Barry Manilow
Music Conductor
 William Ross
Music performed by
 Irish Film Orchestras
 The Anuna Choir
Choral Arrangements
 Earl Brown
Scoring Supervisor
 Molly Hennessey
Songs
 Barry Manilow
 Jack Feldman
 Bruce Sussman
Music Editor
 James Harrison
Songs
 "Follow Your Heart"
 (Waltz), "Follow Your
 Heart" (Can-Can), by
 Bruce Sussman, Jack
 Feldman, Barry
 Manilow, performed
 by Gino Conforti;
 "Thumbelina's Theme",
 "Soon" by Bruce
 Sussman, Jack Feldman,
 Barry Manilow,
 performed by Jodi
 Benson, "Soon" (Reprise)

performed by Barbara
 Cook; "Let Me Be Your
 Wings" by Bruce
 Sussman, Jack Feldman,
 Barry Manilow,
 performed by Gary
 Imhoff, Jodi Benson.
 "Let Me Be Your Wings"
 (Reprise) performed by
 Jodi Benson; "On the
 Road" by Bruce
 Sussman, Jack Feldman,
 Barry Manilow,
 performed by Charo;
 "You're Beautiful Baby"
 by Bruce Sussman, Jack
 Feldman, Barry
 Manilow, performed
 by Randy Crenshaw;
 "Marry the Mole" by
 Bruce Sussman, Jack
 Feldman, Barry
 Manilow, performed
 by Carol Channing
Live Action Reference
Choreography
 Bruno "Taco" Falcon
 Gavin Dorian
Sound Design
 Martin Maryska
Supervising Sound Editor
 John K. Carr
Dialogue Editor
 Jim Fleming
Foley Recordist
 Nerses Gezalayan
Foley Mixer
 Randy Singer
Re-recording Mixers
 Steve Maslow
 Gregg Landaker
Foley Artists
 Dan O'Connell
 Hilda Hodges
Voices
 Jodi Benson
 Thumbelina
Gino Conforti
 Jacquimo
Barbara Cook
 Mother
Will Ryan
 Hero
June Foray
 Queen Tabitha
Kenneth Mars
 King Colbert
Gary Imhoff
 Prince Cornelius
Joe Lynch
 Grundle
Charo
 Mrs (Ma) Toad
Danny Mann
 Mozo
Loren Michaels
 Gringo
Kendall Cunningham
 Baby Bug
Tammy Sunshine Glover
 Gnatty
Michael Nunes
 Lil' Bee
Gilbert Gottfried
 Mr Beetle
Pat Musick
 Mrs Rabbit
Neil Ross
 Mr Fox/Mr Bear
Carol Channing
 Ms Fieldmouse
John Hurt
 Mr Mole
Will Ryan
 Reverend Rat
The Don Bluth Players
 Additional Voices
7,830 feet
87 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour
 Technicolor

A lonely woman asks a good
 witch to give her a daughter, and
 receives a barleycorn seed. When the
 seed grows and opens, a tiny child is
 revealed sleeping inside. The child,
 named Thumbelina, is treated by the
 woman as if she is her own. One night,
 however, Thumbelina meets a fairy
 prince and, before he can return to
 become acquainted properly, she is kid-
 napped by a troupe of toads.

Thumbelina manages to escape
 quickly, but she is now isolated and
 vulnerable in a hostile world. Jacqui-
 mo, a swallow, proves friendly; but
 Berkeley Beetle is less so, and, after
 singing at the Beetle Ball, Thumbelina
 is forced again to flee.

Meanwhile, the prince is searching
 for his lost love, racing against the
 onset of winter. A blizzard arrives, and
 the prince is frozen into a block of ice.
 Thumbelina is luckier – she finds shel-
 ter with a mouse, but is soon under
 siege again, this time from a mole. She
 refuses to become his wife and escapes
 the wedding ceremony. She is soon
 reunited with her prince, who is
 thawed out of the ice and returns to
 defend her.

With children's animation fare
 currently doing all the talking at
 the box-office, one-time Disney animat-
 or Don Bluth has recently sewn up a
 production and distribution deal with
 Twentieth Century Fox to try and
 break his resurgent employers' all-con-
 quering performances. Projects like
 this Hans Christian Andersen adapta-
 tion for Warners will be judged and
 compared directly with the likes of
Aladdin and *Beauty and the Beast*, and
 the evidence points to the inescapable
 conclusion that Bluth has not yet man-
 aged to capture either the visual or
 narrative sophistication with which
 the Disney workshops impregnate
 their output.

The advances made in computer-gen-
 erated imagery, as well as an increas-
 ing appreciation of cinematic style, has
 led Disney towards more gothic, fan-

tastical material. *Thumbelina*, on the
 other hand, is grounded firmly in tra-
 ditional methods of animated story-
 telling: from the page-turning story-
 book introduction, to the cute but
 game cast of insects and small animals
 who assist the heroine. Whether Bluth
 simply does not have access to the kind
 of technology that made the flying car-
 pet or the ever-changing Genie in
Aladdin possible (and it is impossible to
 believe he does not) is a moot point;
 what is much more disappointing is
 the uncertain exploitation of even the
 most basic devices – rushing through
 set-pieces, underplaying one dramatic
 crux after another, frequently ill-
 judged shot choices.

That said, there are some genuinely
 impressive passages – the trail of
 golden dust left by the fairies' progress
 through the autumn woods, Prince
 Cornelius' ice prison which leaves just
 a fingertip free – which go some way
 to counter-balance the pedestrian quality
 of the film as a whole. Admittedly, the
 songs (by Barry Manilow) are no worse
 than those in *Aladdin*, but since both
 are less than inspired examples of the
 most mediocre form of MOR show-
 tunes, there is nothing positive to be
 found there. It is particularly ironic,
 given the importance that the animat-
 ors currently ascribe to music in their
 films, that an increasing proportion of
 a film's running time is given over to
 less and less adventurous songs.

Still, *Thumbelina* delivers its story
 with some measure of efficiency, and
 does just enough to keep a child inter-
 ested, even if the over-stuffed plot risks
 losing and confusing its younger audi-
 ence. There is not much here for their
 adult companions, though, with little
 in the way of gags or thematic idiosyn-
 crasy. Bluth left Disney at their lowest
 ebb in 1979 and it looks increasingly as
 though it might have been better to
 stay. His erstwhile employers are going
 from strength to strength while, on
 the evidence of *Thumbelina* at least,
 Bluth is merely marking time.

Andrew Pulver



The ugly bug ball: 'Thumbelina'

RE-RELEASE

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

USA 1937

Director:Walt Disney

Certificate U Distributor Buena Vista Production Company Walt Disney Productions Ltd Producer Walt Disney Supervising Director David Hand Assistant Directors Hal Adelquist Carl Fallberg Mike Holoboff Ford Beebe Story Adaptation Ted Sears Richard Creedon Otto Englander Dick Rickard Earl Hurd Merrill De Maris Dorothy Ann Blank Webb Smith Based on the fairytale "Schneewitchen" in <i>Kinder und Haus-märchen</i> collected by Jakob Ludwig Karl Grimm, Wilhelm Grimm Sequence Directors Perce Pearce William Cottrell Larry Morey Wilfred Jackson Ben Sharpsteen Supervising Animators Hamilton Luske Fred Moore Vladimir Tytla Norman Ferguson Animators Frank Thomas Les Clark Dick Lundy Fred Spencer Arthur Babbitt Bill Roberts Eric Larson Bernard Garbutt Milton Kahl Grim Natwick Robert Stokes Jack Campbell James Algar Marvin Woodward Al Eugster James Culhane Cy Young Stan Quakenbush Joshua Meador Ward Kimball Ugo D'Orsi Woolie Reitherman George Rowley Robert Martsch John McManus Hugh Fraser Sandy Strother Paul Busch Marc Davis Louie Schmitt Cornett Wood Campbell Grant Andy Paliwoda Riley Thomson	Character Design Albert Hurter Joe Grant Backgrounds Samuel Armstrong Mique Nelson Merle Cox Claude Coats Phil Dike Ray Lockrem Maurice Noble Layouts Lou Debnay Art Directors Charles Philippi Tom Codrick Hugh Hennesy Gustaf Tenggren Terrell Stapp Kenneth Anderson McLaren Stewart Kendall O'Connor Harold Miles Hazel Sewell Animation Special Effects Andy Engman Music Frank Churchill Leigh Harline Paul Smith Songs "I'm Wishing", "Some Day My Prince Will Come", "One Song", "Whistle While You Work", "Heigh Ho", "Isn't This a Silly Song", "With a Smile and a Song" by Frank Churchill, Larry Morey Voices Adriana Caselotti Snow White Harry Stockwell Prince Charming Lucille La Verne The Queen Moroni Olsen Magic Mirror Billy Gilbert Sneezy Pinto Colvig Sleepy/Grumpy Otis Harlan Happy Scotty Mattraw Bashful Roy Atwell Doc Stuart Buchanan Humbert, the Queen's Huntsman Mario Darlington Bird sounds/Warbling Jim Macdonald Fraunfelder Family Yodeling 7,494 feet 83 minutes Dolby stereo In colour
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Once upon a time, an evil Queen
 asks her magic mirror who is the
 fairest in the land, vainly expecting
 the answer to be her. When the mirror
 replies that Snow White, who has just
 met a handsome young prince, is the
 fairest, the Queen is irate. She assigns
 her chief huntsman to kill Snow White
 in the woods while she picks flowers,
 and bring her Snow White's heart in a
 box as proof of the deed. Instead, ►

◀ the huntsman warns Snow White of the Queen's malevolent intentions and urges her to hide in the woods.

After a night cowering from scary trees, Snow White is led by a posse of friendly animals to the home of seven dwarves – Doc, Grumpy, Happy, Sneezzy, Sleepy, Bashful and Dopey – who operate a gem mine. Snow White delegates the animals to various cleaning tasks in the house, and falls asleep in the dwarves' beds. Returning from their labours, the dwarves at first approach her with some trepidation, but when they find she has cooked dinner they are delighted – except for the suspicious Grumpy – and ask her to stay, especially when she tells them about the Queen's death threat.

Meanwhile, the Queen has found out about the huntsman's deception. She disguises herself as an old crone and concocts a poisoned apple which will send Snow White into a death-like sleep, from which she can only be roused by "first love's kiss". After a night of merry-making, the dwarves go off to work, leaving Snow White to mind the house. Fooled by the Queen's disguise, she eats the apple and falls into a catatonic slumber. The animals raise the alarm with the dwarves, who chase the Queen to a towering precipice. Just as she is about to push a rock down on top of them, a lightning bolt fractures the cliff she is standing on, and she falls to her death.

The dwarves build a glass coffin for Snow White and mourn by it as the seasons pass, until one day the Prince finally comes. After being awakened with a kiss on the lips, Snow White bids a fond farewell to the dwarves, and rides off with Prince Charming to live happily ever after.

When Walt Disney announced his intention to make a feature-length animated cartoon, the project was quickly dubbed "Disney's folly". Many in the industry scoffed at the idea of an audience sitting through a cartoon that long, and yet more scorn was heaped when delays set in and the original 500,000-dollar budget trebled with time. Old Walt must be having the last laugh in his alleged cryogenic vault, now that *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is one of the most successful films of all time, allowing for inflation, having recouped its cost many times over.

It is certainly one of the most widely screened films in the world, having been reissued at regular intervals for each new generation of consumers. After re-releasing it only a couple of years ago, the Disney company, with uncharacteristic swiftness, are re-releasing it again, having struck a new optically-tweaked master-print. Apparently all sorts of technical jiggery-pokery has been performed, according to intertitles before the credits, to "selectively" get rid of "dirt, glass platen, and flickering." After it does the rounds in the cinema, it will be released for the first time onto video, and supposedly never re-released again.

The new print does indeed look bet-



Madonna in Munchkinland: 'Snow White...

ter than the one available two years ago. While the colours seem slightly more saturated without being overdone, they are unlike those awful colourisations the Turner corporation has inflicted on its catalogue of MGM classics. The palette is still very 30s, slightly dunnish and pale. Compared with *Aladdin*, it risks looking almost faded, which is in some way rather reassuring. One wonders from a conservation point of view if the restorers decided to eliminate 'mistakes' or leave them be as part of the intrinsic qualities of the original. The latter seems to be the case at some points, for example when an odd corona effect surrounds Snow White's head, like the ghost of an earlier cel. Later, however, it seems as if they have corrected the notorious 'shimmering' of the Prince when he leans down to kiss her, a technical gaffe that Disney could not afford to reshoot the first time round. Sadly, despite conjectures by the cynical, there are no great revelatory surprises like extra dwarves or dream sequences that prove Snow White was a replicant all along.

Compared to current Disney output, the film undoubtedly looks dated, if not in a rather sweet way. The Queen looks a lot like Joan Crawford going through therapy withdrawal. I was struck by how such a simple story is padded out by long bouts of cartoony business, like the dwarves steeling themselves with slapstick to explore the upstairs where Snow White is sleeping, or the amount of time we are shown her cleaning with her anthropomorphic animal friends. The gulf between this and Disney's *Silly Sym-*



...and the Seven Dwarfs'

phonies of the early 30s is not as great as it probably seemed at the time. For all its commitment to forming a coherent and entertaining narrative, at a very basic level the film is about the skills of its animators, which are exquisitely showcased. The scene where the dwarves walk along the path home from the mine, each walking in his own way, Dopey stumbling to keep in step, is justly famed as a masterpiece of character animation. It is humanism in action which no amount of computer graphics could ever upstage.

As for the story, it is so ingrained in the collective memory that to critique its faults would be like accusing the Bible of being superstition-ridden. Of course, in these very different times, it looks embarrassingly patriarchal in the most painfully conventional way, with Snow like the big passive beauty queen she is, cheerfully slaving away for her seven men and wishing for the one she loves, rather than a fulfilling career and a relationship based on equality. Pernicious it might be, but this film was probably most people's introduction to the scurrilous mythology of heterosexual romance; still, there are far less pleasant ways to learn the old lies that are still being perpetuated.

Children today probably learn faster to be sceptical readers. They are certainly much more *au fait* with the intertextual network of images they are offered – one little four- or five-year-old sitting behind me at the screening shouted, "Bambi!" when a deer appeared. He and his coevals seemed perfectly happy undergoing this rite-of-initiation we grown-ups have all experienced, squirming and wandering up and down the aisles no more than they would at a showing of *Beethoven's 2nd*, *Child's Play 4*, or any other contemporary fairy tale. To respond to a recent television documentary about the James Bulger case by the poet Blake Morrison, childhood may indeed have "died in 1993", but at least *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* remains eternal.

Leslie Felperin Sharman

TV FILMS

A Landing on the Sun

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Nicholas Renton

Distributor	Cast
BBCTV	Susan Fleetwood
Production Company	Elizabeth Serafin
BBC	Robert Glenister
For Screen Two	Brian Jessel
Executive Producer	Roger Allam
George Faber	Stephen Summerchild
Producer	Judith Scott
David Snodin	Millie Summerchild
Associate Producer	Patrick Godfrey
Ruth Mayorcas	Francis Tite
Production Executive	Oliver Ford Davies
Ann Faggetter	Treacher
Location Manager	Jane Wymark
Caroline Jeffries	Anne
Casting Adviser	June Barrie
Joyce Nettles	Mrs Padmore
Assistant Director	Michael Fitzgerald
Daphne Phipps	Ken Hurren
Screenplay	Augusta Harris
Michael Frayn	Young Millie
Based on his novel	Delia Lindsay
Continuity	Jessel's Secretary
Brit King	Marlene Sidaway
Script Editors	Joyce
Craig Dickson	Mary Macleod
Anna Price	Mrs Tamm
Director of Photography	Sharon Bower
Fred Tammes	Lynn Jessel
Graphic Designer	Robert Langdon Lloyd
Christine Büttner	Serafin's Husband
Editor	Nicholas Haley
Howard Billingham	Young Jessel
Production Designer	Tom Bradford
Jim Grant	Alexander
Costume Design	Nick Gordon
James Keast	Paul
Wardrobe Master	Michael Fox
Michael Johnson	Timmy Jessel
Make-up/Hair Designer	Paul Webster
Fran Needham	Watertow
Music	Simon Cowell-Parker
Bill Connor	Milmo
Dubbing Editor	Hazel Dunphy
Graham Lawrence	Nurse
Recordist	Xavier Duran
Malcolm Campbell	Pupil
Dubbing Mixer	
Mike Narduzzo	7,000 feet
Stunt Co-ordinator	(at 25 fps)
Peter Brayham	75 minutes

In colour

● Brian Jessel, a civil servant in the Cabinet office, is required to report on the case of Stephen Summerchild, a Cabinet official who fell to his death near the Ministry of Defence 20 years ago. Rumours link the incident with a secret project, and a television company now plans a possible expose. Jessel traces Summerchild's so-called Strategy Unit to a tiny office overlooking Horse Guards Parade, where a cache of dictation tapes proves to contain the unit's history. Formed after Harold Wilson's invitation to an Oxford philosopher, Dr Elizabeth Serafin, to head a government investigation into 'the quality of life', the Unit consisted of Serafin, Summerchild and a typist, Mrs Padmore.

Serafin and Summerchild begin by attempting to identify happiness. As he listens to their rambling exchanges on tape, Jessel recalls the friendship he once had with Millie, Summerchild's daughter, with whom he used to play in the school orchestra. He makes fresh contact with her, finding that she and her mother lead a subdued, joyless existence. Jessel's wife, Lynn, has been hospitalised with depression, and his



As above....: Glenister, Fleetwood, Allam

young son Timmy is unhappy and introverted. By contrast, the Strategy Unit office comes vividly to life as Jessel hears Serafin and Summerchild find happiness in each other.

Their rooftop idyll outrages Mrs Padmore, who leaves, and their failure to replace her attracts the notice of Summerchild's boss, Francis Tite. He pays an unexpected visit just as Serafin receives the news that her husband has left her. She rushes back to Oxford, and Summerchild tells his family he is leaving home, planning to retreat to the world he and Serafin have created. Finding the office door lock changed on Tite's orders, he climbs in from the window below, dictates a final memo, then clambors across the Whitehall roofs until he slips and falls. Ever since, Serafin has quietly devoted herself to her three sons. Jessel reports that no security risks attach to the Summerchild case, junks the tapes, and returns to Millie in the hope that the discovery of happiness is still a possibility.

● If any fault is to be found with Michael Frayn's wonderfully adroit abbreviation of his novel into a *Screen Two* production, it might be that his narrator has shrunk in stature. The placidly bureaucratic Brian Jessel – previously a mandarin to match the mettle of Frayn's impermeable 'tin men', here making their appearance as the glacial Ken Hurren and the urbane Francis Tite – begins and ends the novel by adding tersely dismissive memoranda to the tide of files and reports that flows across his desk. Only when the Summerchild saga begins to grip, and he is pressed as much by the urgency of completing his investigation within the allotted time as by the exceptional lapses in diplomatic behaviour that it uncovers, does he briefly realise: "I've lost all sense of proportion and dignity, like a man in the grip of some uncontrollable craving". On the page, he soon recovers.

On screen, having despatched Summerchild's secrets safely into oblivion, Jessel is last seen with Millie on his way into the house that has shut him out for so many years, potential inheritor to Summerchild's brief but ecstatic moments of revelation. Frayn has given us a 'happy' ending. Encouraged accordingly, Robert Glenister plays this panicking figure with a touch too much down-market doggedness, eyes rolling comically as brow, mouth and

beard are tensed with concentration. Clutching his son's lurid cassette player to his ear, he becomes an earnest clown for whom a neglected child and a demented wife provide an unlikely background and the dignified Millie an unpromising future. When he grabs a trombone to accompany Summerchild's taped serenade, it forms the film's only serious dissonance.

Fortunately the tone quickly reverts to understatement – a study of Englishness and Whitehall ("that great white hall of bumbledom", as Frayn calls it) in whose shadows is fought, as it was in *Clockwise* (Frayn's screenplay), a desperate battle between tongue-tied instinct and eloquent inflexibility. This begs the question as to how Serafin and Summerchild can so easily discard the recollection of their previous partnerships, and whether happiness is really dependent on an inarticulate simplicity. But as expressed by Susan Fleetwood and Roger Allam in performances of quiet perfection, it forms a wordlessly engaging struggle for the unrealisable, an ultimate incandescent burn-out.

The other triumph of *A Landing on the Sun* is the interaction of its characters across the 20-year gulf. As Jessel plays the tapes, Serafin and Summerchild are alive and around him, as real as his own colleagues. Into their silences and sighs, the warming realisation of what they have found together, Jessel stumbles with misreadings and alternatives on his way to the most likely reality – as in the instance when all he can fathom from the noises on the tape is that the couple must be upside down on the ceiling. And there we see them until he discovers the skylight and transfers them, right way up again, into their roof-garden, equipped at second glance with an array of pot plants. Equally satisfying is the incident with the oranges, dropped as Serafin sweeps wildly down a staircase and offered anew to Jessel, a dazed 20 years in her wake. Dauntingly well shot and edited, and directed with tender precision by Nicholas Renton, this is a fluent and elegant production guaranteed to add quality, if not joy, to the life of any spectator.

Philip Strick

Sin Bin

United Kingdom 1994

Director: George Case

Distributor
BBC TV
Production Company
BBC
For Screen Two
Executive Producer
George Faber
Producer
Charles Pattinson
Associate Producer
Melanie Howard
Location Manager
Lesley Williams
Casting Director
Susie Bruffin
Assistant Directors
Rob Evans
Neil Houston
Celia-Jane Willett

Screenplay
Catherine Johnson
Continuity
Charlotte Blair
Script Editor
Nicola Shindler
Director of Photography
John Daly
Steadicam Operators
Simon Bray
Adrian Smith
Alf Tramontin
Graphic Designer
Linda Sherwood-Page
Film Editor
Chris Wimble
Production Designer
Ken Starkey

Art Director
Steve Wright
Costume Design
Sarah Lubel
Make-up Design
Deanne Turner
Make-up Artist
Anna Gorzkowska
Dubbing Mixer
Alan Snelling
Recordist
Graham Ross
Music
Colin Towns
Stunt Arranger
Clive Curtis

Cast
Pete Postlethwaite
Mitch
Graham Aggrey
Gary
Angus Barnett
Terry
Moya Brady
Donna
Kathy Burke
Debbie
Ray Burnside
Union Rep
James Cosmo
Jerry
George Costigan
Don
Jackie Downey
Faye Wrexall
Ullan Ely-O'Carroll
Priest

Michael Gunn
Sergeant Vetch
David Hutton
Keith
Dave Hill
John Dunn
Sheila Hyde
Anna
Anna Heavoney
Denise
Tina Malone
Chrissie
David Plimmer
Neighbour
Ruth Posner
Fiona
Phil Rose
Richard
Ruth Sheen
Viv Hastings
Steve Swinscoe
Stuart Jury
Jean Warren
Sarah
Tommy Wright
Barman

6,000 feet
(at 25 fps)
63 minutes

In colour

● Mitch, Don and Jerry, three nurses in a secure psychiatric unit, attend the wedding of in-patients Terry and Donna. The next day, Mitch has to deal with Gary, a young black inmate, who has become increasingly disturbed since Terry's wedding. After successfully calming Gary down, Mitch has to restrain him again when he reacts violently to racist abuse from Don. The latter beats him up in front of the other patients and later, in the confines of Gary's cell, repeatedly kicks him in the head until a horrified Mitch, who is the only witness, intervenes. When Gary is found dead, Don is suspended and Mitch is transferred to the female ward while an enquiry investigates complaints about Don's aggressive behaviour. Protesting his innocence, Don persuades Jerry, who is a union representative, to call for industrial action, while Mitch (who does not contradict Don's version of events) becomes increasingly struck by the change of mood on the female ward. He is particularly taken with Debbie, a talented artist who is soon to be transferred to a more open unit.

During a day trip for the female patients, Mitch smuggles Terry out to join the group, allowing the newlyweds unsupervised time together. When Debbie's transfer to the open unit is deferred, she slashes her wrists and Mitch is sent back to his old unit after being reprimanded for over-involvement with a patient. Mitch, who still refuses to give evidence against Don, crosses the picket line and is castigated by everyone, including his wife, for being a scab. When one of Don's patients beats Mitch up while his colleagues look on, Mitch has a change of heart and offers to give a statement, only to find that he has been suspended because of allegations made by Debbie of sexual abuse. The failure of management and union to resolve their differences leads to the patients

being locked in. As they become increasingly frantic, Mitch opens all the doors and lets them out. Leaving his colleagues to restrain the disturbed patients, Mitch walks out, oblivious to the news that he has been fired.

● *Sin Bin* is an unusual attempt to focus on the professional lives of psychiatric nurses, who are most often seen as white-coated background figures in other characters' psychodramas. However, despite the documentary-style approach, the determinedly unglamorous look of all concerned (at times the entire Mike Leigh repertory company seems to have been raided by the BBC casting department) and the dour northern town locations, *Sin Bin* injects itself with mega-doses of melodrama. The working practices of the nursing staff are given short shrift, none of the inmates are seen being medicated, and the patient-staff ratio seems far too big for a secure unit (although this may be BBC budgetary constraints accurately mirroring Department of Health cuts).

Without the framework of the everyday pressures on staff, their extraordinary reaction to events appears meaningless. The intense resentment between nurses and managers, is unexplained except in terms of an us-and-them mentality. Though we are given a strong sense of local community (Don and Mitch are revealed to be in-laws; the policeman investigating Gary's killing knew Mitch's father), it is less clear what they are reacting against (unless they are taking revenge against a government which "smashed the miners and the teachers").

The film might have explored the institutionalisation of individuals, whether working or detained, by such centres, where violence can be accommodated because they are safely isolated from the outside world. But it opts for a more sensationalist approach. Within minutes of screen time, and without any contextualisation, Don zooms through the gamut of sexism (drawing obscene graffiti about a female manager), racism ("White men don't clear up after niggers") and unbribed sociopathic violence. We are left to ponder whether he is experiencing a breakdown due to extreme stress, as Mitch does, or whether his behaviour is part and parcel of being a "man" in a northern town.

The treatment of the industrial dispute is equally unconvincing, roller-coasting through a series of union stereotypes, setting up Mitch as a man at loggerheads with the system, his family, friends and the social club ("We don't serve scabs 'ere"). There is no shortage of shots of Mitch by the sea and in the fields, contemplating his dilemma: Pete Postlethwaite is finally reduced to a catatonic state, walking past the dubiously engineered riot ("There's trouble up shock corridor, lad") and retorting feebly, "It's a mad world" to the news that he has been fired. Insanity deserves a better rationalisation than what's on offer here.

Farrah Anwar

Mark Kermode and Peter Dean highlight their ten video choices of the month, and overleaf review, respectively, the rest of the rental and retail releases

VIDEO CHOICE



Bedroom drama: Woody Allen, Diane Keaton in 'Manhattan Murder Mystery'

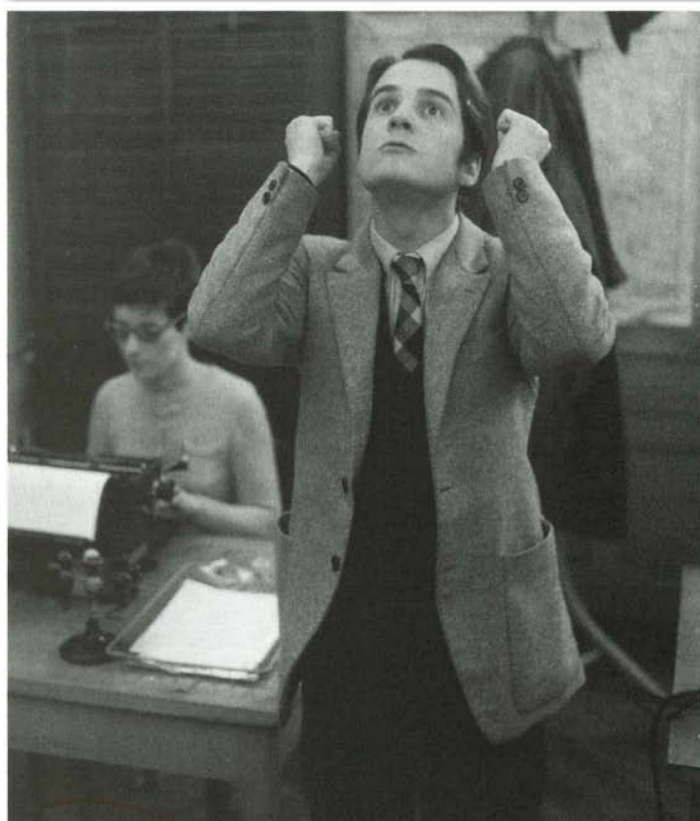
Manhattan Murder Mystery

Director Woody Allen/USA 1993

Despite his much-publicised personal traumas, Allen followed *Husbands and Wives* with this delightfully fanciful urban comedy. New Yorkers Larry and Carol Lipman become convinced that their neighbour is a murderer and

resolve (after hilarious bickering) to unravel the mystery. Described as reminiscent of "the early funny ones", this certainly will hold nostalgic appeal for Allen fans, but also builds on the emotional maturity of his later, more serious work. Diane Keaton is a hoot, and Alan Alda and Anjelica Huston lend solid support. (S&S February 1994)

● Rental; 20.20 Vision NVT 19798; Certificate PG



French expression: Jean-Pierre Léaud in Truffaut's 'Baisers volés'

Baisers volés

Director François Truffaut/ France 1968

In the third film in which Truffaut focuses on his alter ego Antoine Doinel, the character – now a young man of 20 – has moved on from turbulent childhood to youthful rebellion. Having been discharged from the army after going AWOL once too often, Doinel is then sacked from his job as a hotel night porter and becomes an unsuccessful detective. Doinel's character, sophisticatedly developed and immaculately acted by Jean-Pierre

Léaud, is a brilliant mix of arrogance and incompetence. Truffaut, directing with his customary light touch, can't resist filling the screen with a stream of gags. Included on the tape of *Baisers volés* is *Antoine et Colette*, a 30-minute short which originally appeared in the 1962 compilation film *Love at Twenty* – in which Antoine, a record-presser for Philips, infatuated with a music student, moves into the apartment opposite and ends up spending an evening with her parents. (MFB No. 424)

● Rental: Artificial Eye ART 075; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15

Le Jeune Werther

Director Jacques Doillon/France 1993

Doillon's films have difficulty finding distribution in the UK, and *Le Jeune Werther* is another fine effort which has not yet received a theatrical release. Inspired by Goethe's novella *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, the movie observes a group of 13-year-olds after the suicide of a close friend. The children seek out the motive behind the boy's action – was it harassment from the chemistry teacher? Or was it unrequited love for Miren, a pretty neighbour? They decide to confront Miren and punish the teacher. The children's Rohmer-esque reveries on love and life are a sheer delight, and the acting is flawless (particularly from Ismaël Jole, who plays the dead boy's best friend). This intimate drama is well suited to the small screen, but it is a shame that *Le Jeune Werther* has yet to be given a chance on a bigger one.

● Retail: Tartan Video TVT 1168; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Widescreen; Certificate 15; 90 minutes; Producer Hervé Duhamel; Screenplay Jacques Doillon; Lead Actors Ismaël Jole, Marie-Isabelle Rousseau, Thomas Bremond

Mildred Pierce/ Possessed

Directors Michael Curtiz/Curtis Bernhardt/ USA 1945/1947

It is ironic that to celebrate the 70th anniversary of scrap-metal dealer Louis B. Mayer's move into the movie business, MGM is releasing a double-bill of films Joan Crawford made for Warner Bros – particularly since *Mildred Pierce* was the star's big comeback with a rival studio after she and Mayer parted company some years before. *Possessed* is a fine example of film noir, but it is *Mildred Pierce* that deserves a place in the Crawford canon. A noir-influenced melodrama, it won the star an Oscar for her role as a waitress who builds up a successful restaurant business. Zachary Scott is the faithless lover who plots with her spoilt, ungrateful daughter Ann Blyth to betray her. The snappy one-liners, impressive sets, narrative twists and turns and Crawford's performance make for riveting viewing. There are four other double-bills in this collection illustrating the work of some of MGM's biggest stars (see Retail this month). (MFB Nos. 147/168)

● Retail: MGM/UA S0356769; Price £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG



Joan Crawford: 'Mildred Pierce'

Mac

Director John Turturro/USA 1992

A highly personal directorial debut from actor Turturro which examines the family bonds and rivalries of a group of brothers in 50s New York. Disillusioned by the increase of shoddy workmanship on building sites, brothers Bruno, Mac

and Vito decide to build houses to old-fashioned standards of craftsmanship. The story may not sound compelling, but the understated direction, intelligent script and involving performances make this a rewarding, well-constructed drama with plenty of emotional clout. (S&S January 1994)

● Rental: EV EVV 177; Certificate 15



Brotherly love: John Turturro director and star of 'Mac'

Le Jour se lève

Director Marcel Carné/France 1939

Carné and Jean Gabin are at their romantic, doom-laden best in this tale of an *amour fou* between François (Gabin) and Françoise (Jacqueline Laurent). The film begins with a murder and then uses flashbacks to explain how François, a decent factory worker, was driven to commit the crime. François suspects the worst when Françoise starts seeing Valentin, a sleazy dog trainer, and takes

revenge by dating Valentin's partner Clara – a decision that ends in tragedy. Particularly noteworthy are the two huge sets in which the drama is contained, the poetic realism of Carné's direction and Gabin's expressive portrayal of a morally ambiguous character ("with one eye happy, one eye sad"). François' anger at the class system and at life in general creates a feeling of fatalism. (MFB No. 124)

● Retail: Connoisseur Video CR 136; Price £15.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate PG



Romantic tragedy: Arletty and Jean Gabin in 'Le Jour se lève'



Strange acts: 'Killing Box'

The Killing Box

Director George Hinckenlooper/USA 1993

Having worked on the documentary *Hearts of Darkness*, Hinckenlooper returns to the savagery of war for his first feature. Following the massacre of a Confederate regiment, a southern colonel (Corbin Bernsen) is offered a Union pardon if he tracks down the people responsible for a series of bizarre crucifixions at the battle site. Suspecting a renegade regiment, his soldiers find evidence of supernatural forces. An eerie blend of bleak war movie and mainstream horror, benefiting from Kent Wakeford's moody art-house cinematography and Matt Greenberg's excellent script. Hinckenlooper claimed that this version was shortened by the producers, but this remains an outstanding debut.

● Rental: 20/20 Vision NVT 14985; Certificate 18; 92 minutes; Producers Brad Krevoy, Steve Sabler; Screenplay Matt Greenberg; Lead Actors Corbin Bernsen, Adrian Pasdar, Ray Wise, Cynda Williams

Seduction: The Cruel Woman (Verführung: die Grausame Frau)

Director Monika Treut/West Germany 1985

Treut's first feature – co-written, directed and produced with Elfi Mikesch – is a sumptuously conceived glimpse of the world of sado-masochism which is both shocking and engrossing. Wanda, a dominatrix who stages S/M shows on the Hamburg waterfront, is poised to replace her regular lover Cara and her male 'slave' Gregor with an American woman called Justine. Treut uses the device of a journalist's interview and a guided tour of Wanda's stage sets to open out this underground world for an audience unfamiliar with the scene. The stylish *mise en scène* adds a cultured air to the 'decadent' proceedings, and the well-crafted soundtrack conjures up a foreboding atmosphere. A dark and disturbing movie. (S&S May 1993)

● Retail: Out On a Limb DTK 017; Price £14.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18



Foreign worlds: 'Seduction'

Carlito's Way

Director Brian De Palma/USA 1993

A return to form for director De Palma and actor Al Pacino. The movie opens with an audacious slow-motion sequence in which ex-con Carlito Brigante (Pacino) is gunned down, with the subsequent action occurring in flashback as our anti-hero slips from consciousness. David Koepp's script beautifully captures the themes of Edwin Torres' novel, with Carlito unable to escape his violent, criminal past and achieve redemption in the arms of his lover. Plaudits are due to Sean Penn, who gives a show-stealing performance as a slimy lawyer. It is a shame that this video is in pan-and-scan format, undermining the grandeur of Stephen H. Burum's photography. (S&S February 1994)

● Rental: CIC VHA 1723; Certificate 18



Al Pacino: 'Carlito's Way'



The hunger: 'The Refrigerator'

The Refrigerator

Director Nicholas Jacobs/USA 1991

Originally advertised with the excellent tag-line "Somewhere in America a woman is being terrorised by a major domestic appliance", this is a 50s B-movie pastiche with a 90s PC conscience. Newlyweds Steve and Eileen Bateman move from the suburbs to a New York apartment where a demonic refrigerator devours their house guests (freezing tasty souvenir morsels) and destroys their marriage. Eileen is terrified by visions of her mother's domestic slavery, while Steve turns into a crazed consumer, dominating his wife with the refrain: "But I'm your husband!" By turns campily humorous, darkly satirical and nasty, this uneven yarn triumphs through the strength of its central conceit. Paul Gibson's kinetic camera-work and Chris Peterkofsky and Chris Burke's score deserve special mention.

● Rental: Guild G8753; Certificate 18; 86 minutes; Producer Christopher Oldcorn; Lead Actors Dave Simonds, Julia McNeal, Angel Caban, Phyllis Sanz

Reviews in *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

The Age of Innocence

Director Martin Scorsese; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVT 14626; Certificate U
Martin Scorsese's adaptation of Edith Wharton's classic novel is a study of repressed passion in which every gesture and verbal aside has a double meaning and spontaneity is smothered by etiquette. Although Michelle Pfeiffer and Winona Ryder shine in their roles, the social contrivances of the plot grate and tighter editing would not have gone amiss. (S&S February 1994) □

American Heart

Director Martin Bell; USA 1993; EV EVV 1255; Certificate 15
Ex-convict Jack Kelson attempts to rebuild his life in Seattle while his son is lured onto the dangerous streets of the city. This is an odd mix of gritty realism and romantic melodrama, shot in the same locations Bell used for the documentary *Streetwise*. Jeff Bridges and young Eddie Furlong hold the film together with their powerful performances. (S&S January 1994)

Another Stakeout

Director John Badham; USA 1993; Buena Vista D341962; Certificate PG
A tedious sequel to the surprise hit of the 80s. Emilio Estevez and Richard Dreyfuss are joined on stake-out duty by Rosie O'Donnell and an annoying dog. (S&S February 1994) □

Bhaji on the Beach

Director Gurinder Chadha; UK 1993; First Independent VA 20215; Certificate 15
A disparate group of Asian women from Birmingham enjoy a day trip to Blackpool during which various ethnic, marital, cultural and religious crises flair up. Partly financed by Channel 4, Chadha's worthy social drama attempts to deal with too many issues, losing its dramatic structure in the process. Engaging performances and the moments of humour save the day. (S&S February 1994)

Decadence

Director Steven Berkoff; UK 1994; Curzon CV 0041; Certificate 18
An inept adaptation of Berkoff's dreary two-hander in which the physical vigour of the play is lost. Berkoff and Joan Collins annoyingly bleat at one another while distracting camera movements and odd fantasy sequences fail to create visual panache. (S&S February 1994)

Kafka

Director Steven Soderbergh; USA/France 1991; Guild G8751; Certificate 15
Following the success of *sex, lies and videotape*, Soderbergh made this stylish but inaccessible hybrid. Mainly set in Prague (which is shot in grainy black and white), the action is broken halfway

through by a high-tech science fiction fantasy sequence in colour. The result, which looks as if two movies have been stuck together, is surprising, boring and baffling. (S&S June 1994)

Prince of Shadows (Beltenebros)

Director Pilar Miró; Spain 1991; Tartan Video TVT 1165; Certificate 18
Misleadingly promoted as a "steamy thriller packed with raunchy, naked sex scenes", this moody oddity falls between art-house and mainstream cinema. A political exile (Terence Stamp) is dispatched to execute a traitor and becomes involved with a sultry nightclub singer (Patsy Kensit). Noteworthy for the impressive location photography (Madrid, Warsaw, Scarborough) which is handsomely preserved on video. (S&S April 1994)

Undercover Blues

Director Herbert Ross; USA 1993; Warner VO 53063; Certificate 15
A misjudged yuppie comedy in which two ex-undercover agents (Kathleen Turner and Dennis Quaid) are brought out of retirement to track a Czech agent, while at the same time raising their child. The film's original title was *Cloak and Diaper* – which sums it up. (S&S January 1994)

Rental premiere

America Yakuza

Director Frank Capello; USA/Japan 1994; Medusa MO 408; Certificate 18; 91 minutes; Producers Michael Leahy, Aki Kamine; Screenplay Max Strom, John Allen Nelson; Lead Actors Viggo Mortensen, Ryo Ishbashi, Michael Nouri, Franklyn Ajaye, Robert Forster
A stylish action-thriller directed with flair. Undercover FBI agent Nick Davis (Mortensen) infiltrates the Japanese Yakuza, mobsters with an eye on American mafia territory.



My father the hero: 'American Heart'



'The Age of Innocence'

Beach Babes from Beyond

Director Ellen Cabot; USA 1993; Medusa MO 418; Certificate 18; 76 minutes; Producer Cynthia Margulis; Screenplay Alexander Sachs; Lead Actors Joe Estevez, Don Swayze, Joey Travolta, Jacqueline Stallone, Linnea Quigley, Burt Ward
Dreadful pseudo sci-fi soft-porn, of interest only for its almost all-female production team, the return of the TV series *Batman* star Burt Ward and the presence of famous actors' siblings. Linnea Quigley pops up to lend genre appeal.

Class of 1999 II: The Substitute

Director Spiro Razatos; USA 1993; Reflective RE 7017; Certificate 18; 87 minutes; Producer Russell Markowitz; Screenplay Mark Sevi; Lead Actors Sasha Mitchell, Nick Cassavetes, Caitlin Dulaney, Jack Knight, Rick Hill
The tasty cyborg special effects in *Class of 1999* whet your appetite for more, but sadly this sequel does not deliver. A glamorous schoolteacher, terrorised by her pupils, is joined by a robot teacher who escaped the extermination of *Part One*. Mark Sevi's script contains some nice futuristic gags (for example the impeachment of Bill Clinton) but more gadgetry is needed.

The Club

Director Brenton Spencer; USA 1993; Hi-Fi/ers HFV 8264; Certificate 18; 83 minutes; Producer Ilana Frank; Screenplay Robert Cooper; Lead Actors Joel Wyner, Andrea Roth, Rino Romano, Kim Coates
Palatable horror which twists the traditional *Hell Night/Prom Night* scenarios. Hapless partying teenagers are sucked into a surreal void where they must face their personal demons. The movie is helped by the cheap 'n' cheerful effects and a coherent script.

The Custodian

Director John Dingwall; Australia 1993; Guild G8750; Certificate 15; 105 minutes; Producer Adrienne Read; Screenplay John Dingwall; Lead Actors Anthony LaPaglia, Hugo Weaving, Barry Otto, Essie Davies
Journalist turned director Dingwall delves into the subject of police corruption with gripping results. Honest cop James Quinlan (LaPaglia) decides to betray his partners who are involved in internal vice. LaPaglia anguishes in the *Serpico*-esque lead, but top marks go to Hugo Weaving, who is excellent as Quinlan's slimy associate.

Fist of Honor

Director Richard Pepin; USA 1993; Imperial Entertainment IMP 143; Certificate 18; 90 minutes; Producers Joseph Merhi, Richard Pepin; Screenplay Charles T. Kangains; Lead Actors Sam Jones, Joey House, Bubba Smith, Abe Vigoda
Low budget, feet-and-fists action from the stalwart Merhi/Pepin stable. A boxer takes revenge for the murder of his fiancée and becomes involved in an inter-family mob war.

Forced to Kill

Director Russell Solberg; USA 1993; Imperial Entertainment IMP 147; Certificate 18; 89 minutes; Producer/Screenplay Corey Michael Eubanks; Lead Actors Corey Michael Eubanks, Michael Ironside, Don Swayze, Bridget Butler
A repo man is kidnapped and forced to take part in a bare-knuckle fight to save his and his fiancée's life. Eubanks has the muscles and the backing finance, but when it comes to scriptwriting he isn't William Goldman. Ironside plays his reliable villain role.

Indecent Behaviour

Director Lawrence Lanoff; USA 1993; Hi-Fi/ers HFV 8262; Certificate 18; 95 minutes; Producer Michael Caine; Screenplay Rosalind Robinson; Lead Actors Shannon Tweed, Gary Hudson, Jan-Michael Vincent, Brandy Sanders
An odd erotic-thriller which, although largely a predictable exploitation pic, features a couple of incongruous, intimate moments revealing a sensitive touch beneath the sleaze. Sex therapist Tweed, renowned for using the drug *Extremis* and for her outlandish sexual exploits, is suspected of murder. Voyeurism, saxophones and a hokey sci-fi plot, but with a hint of something more.

Knights

Director Albert Pyun; USA 1993; FoxVideo 8604; Certificate 15; 90 minutes; Producer Tom Karnowsky; Screenplay Albert Pyun; Lead Actors Kathy Long, Lance Henriksen, Kris Kristofferson
Cynthia Rothrock rival Kathy Long (Van Damme has called her "the star of the 90s") gives an impressive performance, and her athletic japes carry this daft movie. Rebellious Nea

PRIVATE VIEW

Shelly Mars on her role in lesbian video culture and her part in the film 'Virgin Machine'

Acting up



Having fun with the girls: Ina Blum and Susie Bright in 'Virgin Machine'

A few weeks ago, performance artist Annie Sprinkle's manager called me to say that *Sight and Sound* wanted Annie to write an article on Monika Treut's films, but as Annie was too busy, and since I was one of the principle performers in her movie *Virgin Machine*, would I do it. "Sure", I said, "What the hell."

The story about how I got the part in *Virgin Machine* begins in San Francisco in 1986. At the time, I was filming Shelly's *Psycho Deli*, a video based on some of the characters I use in my performance act (video is important to lesbian film-makers because its cheapness and accessibility mean that it is easily circulated in gay communities). Lesbian cinema more often than not originates on video and then, if lucky, makes the transition to film. A year or so earlier, before my move to New York, I had helped pioneer burlesque shows for lesbians. Debbie Sundahl, now the publisher for the magazine *On Our Backs*, asked me if I would participate in one of these shows. My performance act involved experimenting with gender-bending (and still does), and in my video I featured a character called Martin who was a beer drinking, coke snorting straight guy who loves lesbians. I thought it would be a hoot to perform a striptease in the character of Martin. Well, it was wild. Half the dykes loved it while the other half hated it. I was crude – it was such a release for me to indulge in my macho male self; girls (the writer Susie Bright for one) jumped on the stage, screaming as they squeezed my throbbing love tool and begging to suck my banana. A handful of PC audience members hissed and shouted, "take it off or get the fuck off the stage." I was ten minutes in to the act and I knew the music would end at any moment,

so I decided it was time to climax and get off the stage before a big dyke took me off for good. I grabbed a beer bottle from a table. It felt great, I began jerking into the wind and screamed, "I'm gonna cum", and did. The poor people in the front row were soaked. I shrivelled up in shame and the girls screamed, "Ooooh poor guy, Martin's lost his juice." I knew this beautiful chaos was a night to remember, and thanks to Debbie Sundahl the historical event was captured on video.

Several months later, I received a call from Monika Treut. Debbie had shown her the video of the show, and Monika wanted me to perform the same act in her upcoming movie *Virgin Machine*. Monika also wanted me to play a woman in the movie called Ramona who was a sex therapist and a lesbian hooker. I don't want to say much more about the film except that I recommend you see it – it's a classic.

I was flown to San Francisco and taken to a beautiful beach in Marin County, which is on the other side of the Golden Gate bridge, for a picnic with the German director and her crew. Monika Treut is a very attractive, charismatic woman and extremely knowledgeable about cinema. Her strength lies in finding interesting people and subjects and mixing them up together, creating films that are unique and daring. We chatted for a while about our favourite films and about the script, cast and crew. The crew was entirely female, bar one man – a sound technician from Berlin. We began shooting the movie shortly after that meeting. Looking back on that time, what strikes me about it was how pleasant the experience was. Everything ran to schedule (a German forte, I believe). I began performing my

act at 10am, and continued through the day doing several takes. It was a different experience from performing live. Monika doesn't believe in directing you too much – she lets the atmosphere create the scene – so it was pretty much up to me to choreograph the sequence. The feeling in front of the cameras wasn't as raw as a live performance, less spontaneous and more tame, but it was still exhilarating and the audience loved it.

My week was over and it was a wrap – time to party and go home. I remember thinking, "That was a lot of fun, but I bet nobody is going to see this little, low-budget, half-lesbian film – except perhaps at a film festival." Boy, was I wrong. Monika found a distributor in Europe and the States and the movie was a hit. The film played all over the world and Martin, my male persona, received a lot of attention. When the film was released in New York I went to see it at the same cinema every night for almost six weeks. I am a born voyeur and it was a thrill to see myself up on the screen and to watch the cinema audience's reaction to me – this is a pleasure I can't indulge in when I perform live.

It is an exciting experience meeting people that have seen the film from places as far apart as Sydney and Ohio. Of course, they don't recognise me, so I explain that, "Yeah, I was the guy with the beer bottle." Then I give them a flyer to one of my shows, and say, "If you liked that, you're really going to like this."

I always wait expectantly for the next Monika Treut film. Even if I don't always love the film all the way through, she has a way of showing a slice of life one would not normally see. 'Seduction: The Cruel Woman', 'Virgin Machine' and 'My Father Is Coming' are being released on video by Out On A Limb this year

(Long) teams up with a super-cyborg (Kristofferson) to defeat Job (Lance Henriksen), the leader of a band of bloodthirsty robots who police a nihilistic future. The climactic battle sequence that we are led to expect fails to materialise because Pyun ran out of money before the film could be completed.

Last Light

Director Kiefer Sutherland; USA 1993; Hi-Fiers HFV 8266; Certificate 18; 100 minutes; Producer Mary McLaglen; Screenplay Robert Eisele; Lead Actors Forrest Whitaker, Kiefer Sutherland, Amanda Plummer, Kathleen Quinlan

A surprisingly able and gritty piece of work from actor-turned director Kiefer Sutherland. Death row prisoner Denver Baylis (Sutherland) strikes up an unlikely rapport with prison guard Fred Whitmore (Whitaker). The movie's powerful anti-death penalty message comes through loud and clear.

The Last Outlaw

Director Geoff Murphy; USA 1993; 20.20 Vision NVT 21667; Certificate 15; 89 minutes; Producer John Davis; Screenplay Eric Red; Lead Actors Mickey Rourke, Dermot Mulroney, Geoff Murphy, Steve Buscemi, Keith David

From cult scriptwriter Eric Red comes a characteristically grim, nihilistic Western. Confederate bandits turn on their vicious leader Colonel Graff (Rourke) who in return betrays them. The impressive ensemble cast seem authentically downtrodden with Quinn and Buscemi's performances particularly impressive. Rourke, after a slew of mainstream flops, recaptures his nasty rebellious charm.

Pointman

Director Robert Ellis Miller; USA 1994; Warner V013231; Certificate TBC; 88 minutes; Executive Producer Maurice Hurley; Screenplay Steve Hattman, Maurice Hurley; Lead Actors Jack Scalia, Roxan Biggs, Bruce A. Young, Robert Ellis Miller

Post-Bodyguard fodder in which a former Wall Street whizz leaves prison and becomes a bodyguard bent on revenge.

Puppet Master 4

Director Jeff Burr; USA 1993; CIC Paramount VHB 2829; Certificate 15; 77 minutes; Producer Keith Payson; Screenplay Todd Henschell, Steven E. Carr, Jo Duffy, Doug Aarkinokoski, Keith Payson; Lead Actors Gordon Currie, Chandra West, Jason Adams, Teresa Hill, Guy Rolfe

Take five scriptwriters, some dolls and the director of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre 3*, place them in the hands of Full Moon Entertainment main man Charles Band, and this schlock is what you get. The formerly murderous living dolls are joined by a head-changing 'decapitron' in their fight against the surreal 'totems'. Big on models, but (unsurprisingly) low on gore.

With Harmful Intent

Director Richard Friedman; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVT 21942; Certificate 15; 88 minutes; Producer Henry Coleman; Screenplay Adam Greenman; Lead Actors Joan Van Ark, Christopher Noth, Rick Springfield, Daniel J. Travanti

Dull, but occasionally risible adaptation of Judith Kelman's novel *Someone's Watching Me*. A detective (Travanti) hunts down a maniac with a vendetta against smart children.

Retail

Alexander's Ragtime Band

Director Henry King; USA 1938; FoxVideo 1121; Price £12.99; Certificate U

Stirring Irving Berlin musical about two songwriters who vie for the affections of a rising musical comedy star. King used the same leads – Tyrone Power, Alice Faye and Don Ameche – from his previous film *In Old Chicago* (see below). (MFB No. 56)

Allegro non troppo

Director Bruno Bozzetto; Italy 1977; Tartan Video TVT 1144; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15

A forced and not terribly clever pastiche of Disney's *Fantasia*, consisting of short animated pieces set to classical music. Each section is linked by a live-action sequence in which Maurizio Nichetti plays the conductor of an orchestra consisting of old women. (MFB No. 547)

Body Snatchers

Director Abel Ferrara; USA 1993; Warner SO 13027; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S Video January 1994)

Boudu Saved from Drowning

(*Boudu sauvé des eaux*)

Director Jean Renoir; France 1932; Artificial Eye ART 091; Price £15.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate PG
Wonderfully atmospheric and anarchic comedy in which a tramp saved from drowning brings chaos to the household of his rescuer – seducing his wife and mistress before returning to the banks of the river. This is the last of the four films Renoir made with Michel Simon – an evergreen treat which was remade in the 80s as *Down and Out in Beverly Hills*. (MFB No. 382)

Christopher Columbus: The Discovery

Director John Glen; USA 1992; PolyGram Video 6320523; Price £10.99; Certificate PG (S&S October 1992)

Circus Boys (Ni ju-seiki Shonen Dokuhon)

Director Kaizo Hayashi; Japan 1989; ICA Projects ICAV 1010; Price £12.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate 15
A tale in which one of two brothers raised in a travelling circus abandons his artistic career to become a con man. The rebel brother runs away with the girlfriend of a powerful Yakuza boss and the couple spend an emotional night in the big top. The piece is so atmospheric that it is hard to believe Hayashi's claim that he had never been to a circus before making this film. (S&S July 1991)

Consenting Adults

Director Alan J. Pakula; USA 1992; Hollywood D915230; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S March 1993)

Crush

Director Alison Maclean; New Zealand 1992; Tartan Video TVT 1166; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Certificate 15 (S&S April 1993)

Cup Final (Gemar Gavia)

Director Eran Riklis; Israel 1991; Tartan Video TVT 1142; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Widescreen; Certificate 15
Intelligent anti-war drama which uses



Recreating the myth: Madeleine Sologne and Jean Marais as the lovers in 'L'Eternel retour'

football as a metaphor for the Arab/Israeli conflict. Set during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the film focuses on an Israeli soldier Sergeant Cohen (Moshe Ivgy) whose hopes of going to the world cup in Spain are dashed when he is taken hostage by the PLO. Captive and captors are portrayed as being on the same team in a game of war which is played out around them. (S&S June 1993)

The Diary of Lady M (Le Journal de Lady M)

Director Alain Tanner; France/Switzerland/Belgium/Spain 1993; Mainline MPV 009; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18
Tanner reunites with Flame in *My Heart* writer/star Myriam Mézières and treads similar ground in this exploration of sexuality and personal and cultural identity. Cabaret singer M (Mézières) falls for a man she meets on a Parisian street and follows him to Barcelona where she becomes involved in a disastrous ménage à trois. The film fails to match the sureness of Tanner's earlier *Messidor*, and is not helped by the ambiguous nature of Mézières' sexual and racial politics. (S&S May 1994)

The Distinguished Gentleman

Director Jonathan Lynn; USA 1992; Hollywood D917160; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S April 1993)

L'Eternel retour (Love Eternal)

Director Jean Delannoy; France 1943; Art House AHC 7008; Price £15.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate U
Jean Marais and Madeleine Sologne play the doomed lovers in this version of the Tristan and Isolde legend. Patrice (Marais) brings Nathalie (Sologne) to the château of his recently widowed friend in the hope that she will marry the latter. Instead, the young couple fall in love after a vicious dwarf administers a love potion. The script is by Jean Cocteau. (MFB No. 146)

Flipper

Director James B. Clark; USA 1963; MGM/UA SO 50800; Price £8.99; Certificate U
Luke Halpin stars as a boy who saves

the life of a dolphin who has been hit by a diver's spear. The two embark on a series of adventures. (MFB No. 355)

The Getaway

Director Sam Peckinpah; USA 1972; Warner SO 11122; Price £10.99; Certificate 18
Steve McQueen is mesmerising in this Walter Hill adaptation of a Jim Thompson novel in which there are no redeemable characters. Sam Peckinpah directs with typically relentless violence a tale of a gang of criminals who double cross one another. (MFB No. 478)

La Gloire de mon père (My Father's Glory)/Le Château de ma mère (My Mother's Castle)

Director Yves Robert; France 1990; Artificial Eye ART 097; Price £19.99; Subtitles; Widescreen; Certificate U
The childhood recollections of Marcel Pagnol are transferred to the screen. In *La Gloire de mon père*, the boy Pagnol spends a perfect summer in the foothills of Provence. In *Ma mère* he passes the time in the grounds of a château which the grown-up Marcel eventually acquires for his film company. (S&S June 1991/August 1991)

Gunhed

Director Masato Harada; Japan 1989; Manga MAN 1001; Price £12.99; Certificate 15
Alien, *The Terminator* and manga animation inspire this over-complicated and unsatisfactory sci-fi fantasy in which a computer in the year 2025 battles with military robots. (S&S April 1994)

Hoffa

Director Danny DeVito; USA 1992; Guild GLD 51492; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S April 1993)

In Old Chicago

Director Henry King; USA 1938; FoxVideo 1351; Price £12.99; Certificate U
Gripping melodrama which traces the events leading to the great Chicago fire of 1871, focusing on a torrid affair between a gambler and a singer. (MFB No. 51)

King Kong

Director Merian C. Cooper; USA 1933;

PolyGram 0863623; Price £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG
Classic monster movie in which Fay Wray finds herself in the grip of a giant ape clinging to the Empire State building. This is the most complete version of the film with previously excised scenes restored. (MFB No. 158)

Life on a String (Bian Zou Bian Chang)

Director Chen Kaige; Hong Kong/UK/Germany 1991; ICA Projects ICAV 1008; Price £12.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
This early feature from the director of *Farewell My Concubine* is full of visual delights and narrative twists. Two blind musicians – an old master and his disciple – wander through rural north-west China. The master carries a prescription inside his instrument which he believes will cure his blindness, but he can only use it after he has broken the thousandth string during the course of playing. His unruly pupil Shitou upsets their relationship by falling in love with a peasant woman. (S&S March 1992)

Mr Klein

Director Joseph Losey; France/Italy 1976; Arrow AV 009; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Alain Delon stars as Robert Klein, a womanising Parisian antiques dealer who is mistaken for his Jewish namesake during the Nazi occupation. He assumes the personality of his double in this overlong examination of identity and French culpability during the invasion. (MFB No. 520)

MGM 70th Anniversary Collection:

Keeper of the Flame/Woman of the Year

Directors George Cukor/George Stevens USA 1942/1942; MGM/UA S035676; Price £12.99; B/W; Certificate U (MFB Nos. 111/101)

The Old Maid/Dangerous

Directors Edmund Goulding/Alfred E. Green; USA 1939/1935; MGM/UA S035678; Price £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG (MFB Nos. 73/30)

The Petrified Forest/Marked Woman

Directors Archie Mayo/Lloyd Bacon; USA 1936/1937; MGM/UA S035677; Price £12.99; B/W; Certificate U (MFB Nos. 27/41)

ENDNOTES

By Mark Kermode

● Vangelis' original score for Ridley Scott's 1982 cult sci-fi classic *Blade Runner* arrives after 12 years of internal wrangling. An Oscar winner in 1981 for his pulsating, anthemic *Chariots of Fire* music, Vangelis has scored such diverse movies as Roland Joffé's eighteenth-century epic *The Mission* (1986) and Roman Polanski's controversial erotic thriller *Bitter Moon* (1992). He entered the film market after the German group Tangerine Dream attracted attention with their cyclical electronic score for William Friedkin's *Sorcerer* in 1977. The movie was not a success, but the band's futuristic music attracted critical praise (and, more importantly, youth interest), paving the way for other experimental or 'progressive' rock acts to move into incidental film music. Like Tangerine Dream, Greek composer Vangelis (full name Vangelis O. Papathanassiou) has a strong pop connection (his work with Jon Anderson of Yes earned him top-ten single successes). Also like the Dream, his music was not a success, but the band's futuristic music attracted critical praise (and, more importantly, youth interest), paving the way for other experimental or 'progressive' rock acts to move into incidental film music. Like Tangerine Dream, Greek composer Vangelis (full name Vangelis O. Papathanassiou) has a strong pop connection (his work with Jon Anderson of Yes earned him top-ten single successes). Also like the Dream, his music was not a success, but the band's futuristic music attracted critical praise (and, more importantly, youth interest), paving the way for other experimental or 'progressive' rock acts to move into incidental film music.

Rumours of "artistic differences" between Scott and Vangelis dogged the post-production of *Blade Runner*. It was reported that the director had used temporary orchestral cues to cut his movie, while angling for a substitute composer to step into the breach. On hearing Vangelis' finished work, Scott was swayed, but none the less proceeded to rearrange and augment his score with source music without the composer's consent. When contractual disputes ensued, scuppering plans for an original soundtrack album, the New American Orchestra produced an orchestral re-recording to fill the vacuum, which was duly released in 1982 to healthy sales.

Nine years later, when Ridley Scott's director's cut of *Blade Runner* surfaced in San Francisco, initial reports (see *Sight and Sound* December 1992) suggested that Vangelis' electronic score had suffered "symphonic substitutions". Oddly, this echoed the furore which had surrounded the dual scoring of Ridley Scott's 1985 *Legend*. Originally completed with a haunting score by Jerry Goldsmith, *Legend* was heavily cut for its US release by Universal executive Sidney Jay Sheinberg, who also demanded the dropping of Goldsmith's score in favour of new music by Tangerine Dream. Reluctantly, Scott agreed, only to see the new "upbeat" version released in the States to public and critical derision, with special venom reserved for *Legend*'s teen-oriented synthesiser score.

In fact, as the general release of Scott's preferred version proved, the speculation around the *Blade Runner* score was unfounded. The director's cut featured a Vangelis soundtrack apparently unaltered from the 1982 version, from which only two cues were currently available on the Vangelis 'Themes' compilation album. (An extremely limited CD on the Off World label featuring a mix of Vangelis cues and source music from *Blade Runner* had been sneaked out of England in 1993, although according to *Video Watchdog*, this was merely a "superior bootleg").

On first listening, the 12 tracks that comprise East/West's definitive 'Vangelis: *Blade Runner*' album seem coherent and complete, an accurate record of the ominous score which so handsomely enhanced Scott's bleak futuristic vision. The glossy, self-conscious modernity of synthesiser music tends to become dated very quickly, but Vangelis' early 80s score eerily prefigures the ambient disco beat which is now becoming fashionable. It is little wonder that the rhythmic track 'Blade Runner (End Titles)', with its hypnotic, trance-like layers of sound, has been chosen for release as a pop single.

Confusingly, however, the composer's sleeve notes state that only *most* of the music contained on the album came from Vangelis' original 1982 *Blade Runner* London sessions, while omitting to clarify which are the new tracks, or to expand on their genesis and history. It is also disappointing that reports that the Peter Skellern track "One More Kiss, Dear", included on this album, was replaced on some *Blade Runner* prints by the Ink Spots' "If I Didn't Care" have not been verified or refuted on the sleeve.

On a more positive note, the album makes excellent use of dialogue clips from the film overlaid on Vangelis' score to evoke key scenes such as Deckard's examination of a (magical) photograph, the discovery of the true replicant nature of Racheal, and android Roy Batty's poignant final farewell ("All this will be lost like tears in rain..."). Although dialogue clips on soundtrack albums virtually disappeared during the 70s and 80s, recently they have made a welcome return on recordings such as *Reservoir Dogs*, *Hardware*, *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Perhaps the most influential use of dialogue bites on a recent soundtrack was Michael Kamen's superb *Brazil* score, a montage of music and voices to which this album owes a heavy debt. Released last year on the Milan label, *Brazil* (like *Blade Runner*) was for years much requested but mysteriously unavailable. Ironically, among the obstacles Kamen's acclaimed work encountered was a concerted attempt by one Universal executive to strip it from the movie in favour of a pop score. The executive in question was none other than Sidney Sheinberg.



Dolly's shot: 'Blade Runner'

The Hucksters/San Francisco

Directors Jack Conway/W. S. Van Dyke; USA 1947/1936; MGM/UA S035675; Price £12.99; B/W; Certificate U (MFB Nos. 163/31)

Along with the double-bill of *Mildred Pierce* and *Possessed* (see this month's Video Choice), MGM are releasing these eight classic films to celebrate the studio's 70th birthday.

One Deadly Summer (L'Été meurtrier)

Director Jean Becker; France 1984; Price £12.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18

Isabelle Adjani was highly praised for her performance as a 19-year-old Provençal woman who returns to her village to seek revenge on the villagers who raped her mother. As the first step in her obsessive quest, Adjani seduces and marries Alain Souchon.

(MFB No. 605)

Prototype

Director Philip Roth; USA 1992; PolyGram 6312743; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S Video March 1993)

Rouge

Director Stanley Kwan; Hong Kong 1987; ICA Projects ICAV 1009; Price £12.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15

This Jackie Chan-produced movie was responsible for creating international interest in Hong Kong's film industry. In this extraordinary mix of romance and the supernatural, a contemporary journalist is persuaded by a ghost to find the spirit of her lover, both having committed suicide in 1934. (MFB No. 673)

Shadowhunter

Director J. S. Cardone; USA 1992; Medusa 13302; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S Video April 1993)

Le Souffle au coeur

Director Louis Malle; France 1971; Electric Pictures EP 0056; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18

Stodgy melodrama which became something of a *cause célèbre* when released due to its sensitive handling of the issue of incest. A repressed Catholic teenager makes love to his vivacious mother while recovering from a heart murmur at a health spa. (MFB No. 453)

South Central LA

Director Steve Anderson; USA 1992; Warner S0 12594; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S July 1993)

Tampopo

Director Juzo Itami; Japan 1986; Electric Pictures EP 0061; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18

Described by its director as "Japan's first noodle Western", *Tampopo* – about a stranger's attempts to turn a lowly noodle-shack owner into the best noodle chef in the east – is irresistible fun. The preparation of the noodles is hilarious, exposing the Japanese as an epicurean nation devoted to oral gratification. Delicious. (MFB No. 651)

Trapeze

Director Carol Reed; USA 1956; MGM/UA S0 51497; Price £ 9.99; Certificate U France's Cirque d'Hiver is the setting for this romantic melodrama. Tony Curtis' travels to Paris to learn from Burt Lancaster how to perform a triple aerial somersault. (MFB No. 271)

Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me

Director David Lynch; USA 1992; Guild GLD 51452; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S November 1992)

Up the Chastity Belt

Director Bob Kellett; UK 1971; Warner S0 38350; Price £12.99; Certificate 15 Hit and miss Frankie Howerd vehicle released with the previously available *Up Pompeii*. Howerd plays Lurkalot, serf to his master Sir Coward de Custard. (MFB No. 447)

Went the Day Well?

Director Alberto Cavalcanti; UK 1942; Lumiere LUM 2118; Price £10.99; B/W; Certificate PG A propaganda piece in which the inhabitants of the tiny village of Bramley Green thwart a Nazi invasion of Britain spearheaded by a battalion of German soldiers masquerading as Tommies. Though the film looks a little dated now, the idea that violence is lurking just beneath the surface of cosy English suburbia still has the power to disturb. (MFB No. 107)

Retail premiere

Le Chat

Director Pierre Granier-Deferre; France 1973; Arrow AV 010; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15; 88 minutes; Producer Unknown; Screenplay Pascal Jardin; Lead Actors Jean Gabin, Simone Signoret Jean Gabin and Simone Signoret star in this tale of a married couple who end up hating one another after 25 years together. An adopted stray cat becomes symbolic of the couple's alienation. Inspired casting and intelligent direction help the story along.

Game of Death II

Director See-Yuan Ng; Hong Kong 1981; PolyGram 0886283; Price £10.99; Certificate 18; 96 minutes; Producer Raymond Chow; Screenplay Unknown; Lead Actors Bruce Lee, Tony Lung, Huang Cheng-Li Bobby (Tony Lung) tries to find out who is responsible for the death of his brother (Bruce Lee). Lee's presence is created using clips from his films.

The Indecent Woman (De Onfatsoenlijke Vrouw)

Director Ben Verbong; Netherlands 1991; Imagine IHE 1014; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18; 96 minutes; Producers Chris Brouwer, Haig Balian; Screenplay Ben Verbong, Marianna Dikker, Jean van de Velde, Peter Märthesheimer; Pea Fröhlich; Lead Actors Huub Stapel, José Way

A more intelligent, if unremarkable, version of 9 1/2 Weeks in which violinist Emilia jeopardises her marriage to a psychiatrist by having an affair with the mysterious Leon. The couple's sex games lead to disaster.

Rape of the Vampire (Le Viol du vampire)

Director Jean Rollin; France 1967; Redemption RETN 034; Price £12.99; Certificate 18; 120 minutes; B/W; Subtitles; Widescreen; Producer Sam Selsky; Screenplay Jean Rollin; Lead Actors Solange Pradel, Bernard Letro, Catherine Deville, Ursule Pauly A stock vampire movie in two parts which benefits from black and white photography. It begins promisingly enough, but the second part, titled 'Les Femmes vampires', is risibly bad.

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 071 436 2327

Cannes awards

From Hugo Davenport, Daily Telegraph film critic
The speculations of your correspondent on the thinking of this year's international critics' jury at Cannes are misinformed (Business S&S July). I was the British representative on that jury; the truth is that the prize may be awarded in one of two ways – either for a masterwork by an established film-maker or to mark the full flowering of a younger talent.

The eliminative voting was a very close-run thing between Kieślowski's *Three Colours: Red* and Atom Egoyan's *Exotica* – so close, in fact, that more than one critic raised the question of splitting the award between the two directors. However, it then became clear that this option was not available under Fipresci guidelines.

Those who favoured Egoyan generally accepted *Red* as a film of real quality and depth, but did not feel it necessarily qualified as a masterwork beside the formidable standard Kieślowski has set himself. Therefore Egoyan won, by a whisker. Naturally, there was surprise among many critics when the main jury, with a wider range of awards, failed to give Kieślowski anything, but that is a separate issue.

London E8

Backing Britain

From Allan Scott

I write to support the comments contained in David Aukin's letter about *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (S&S July). As a matter of editorial policy you chose to print this letter together with a largely negative view of the film from Alan Madsen, presumably in order to demonstrate that there was support for your reviewer's strictures. But whatever the intrinsic qualities or failings of the film itself, this editorial juggling fails to address the central point raised in Aukin's letter. These are matters of some importance, not so easily dismissed as you may wish.

The BFI exists to support the culture and industry of film in this country. Other than changes in the fiscal climate – an issue being addressed by several bodies currently lobbying the government – no single barrier to success for our industry is greater than (y)our culture-vulture view of cinema. No one asks that individual reviewers should predicate their opinions on a notional responsibility or even interest in the British film industry. But Aukin is correct to draw to your readers' attention the unhelpful attitude exemplified by such snootily dismissive reviews; these are of a kind which holds our industry back from a more wholehearted commitment to commercial (which does not equal bad) cinema.

Film-makers in this country need to be encouraged to emerge from the state of siege under which many feel they are held by those whose cultural ambitions and cinema snobbery restrain them from aspiring to the real world of market success in international cinema. The so-called auteur theory (still apparently espoused by *Sight and Sound*, otherwise why would you continue

to give directors possessive credits and relegate the screenwriter to a place below location managers and associate producers in your credit listings?) and the narrow view which seems to associate commercial success with artistic failure lies at the heart of many of our industry's problems. Whatever the supposed failings of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, it is a film which has made contact with large audiences. This success offers others in the UK a genuine if momentary opportunity to secure finance for British films with global market potential.

We seek no Panglossian editorial policy. But it would be more useful and enlightening to enumerate and analyse the reasons for the film's success rather than to offer a platform for the carping of any individual's view of the its perceived failings.

Rafford Films, London SW7

Editor's note: Alan Madsen's was just one of many letters critical of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, which, last month, outnumbered letters of support.

Right to review

From Richard Haysom

David Aukin, Head of Drama at Channel 4, seems to want you to doctor a review just because he doesn't agree with it (Letters, S&S July). Presumably his belief that your reviews have a powerful influence on the British Film Industry is to be applauded – but should your critics consult him in future before so much as turning on their word processors?

I have often disagreed with your reviewers, but I would never comment on their right to believe that a particular film is good or bad – just as I have a right to like or dislike the same product. Even if Caren Myers had loved *Four Weddings and a Funeral* I would hardly have called her review "ridiculous". Perhaps Mr Aukin should note that just because a film is successful in America it doesn't mean that it's any good. After all, *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* was number one there for weeks.

I suppose the inevitable *Four Weddings and a Funeral II* (or *One Wedding and Four Funerals?*) will be issued complete with an Aukin-approved review to be used everywhere.

London SW12

Picturing the aristocracy...

From Darren Corps

I must confess that I am baffled by the attacks on films such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Letters, S&S July). Certainly when I went to see it, at my local multiplex, there were a lot of young people finding equal enjoyment from its at times hilarious dialogue. Such attacks remind one of the same kind of derisive remarks accorded to Merchant-Ivory's *A Room with a View*. Of course, many academics would claim that the youth of today has been Thatcherised and so is in awe of those who possess wealth and property. Perhaps... but this is to miss the point that audiences do not decode texts in straightforward ways. Audiences bring other discourses to filmic texts. We can see that Charles (Hugh Grant) in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* has friends who have heaps of money. We acknowledge the fact that Charles is both charming and has witty mannerisms. This does not mean either that we want to be like Charles, or that we

have changed our minds about notions of wealth redistribution.

It seems to me that intellectuals do not like to see members of the aristocracy on screen. Why? From my readings I have always gained the impression that Mike Leigh, Ken Loach, Stephen Frears *et al* are preferred. If there is a favouritism here for political reasons, why is it not acknowledged? As a cultural tourist I find that when I metaphorically visit the upper classes I can laugh at some of their foibles. Perhaps academics/intellectuals find their eccentricities too close to home.

Gosport, Hampshire

... and the workers

From Mark Brown

On very limited release, *Daens* only came to Glasgow in June. On finally seeing this magnificent film, I was struck by just how much Martin Bright's review (S&S April) was a reflection of his own cynicism, rather than a just appraisal of Stijn Coninx's movie.

Bright's polemic, tinged with more than a little fashionable, but intellectually bankrupt post-modernism, described *Daens* in terms of "a monochrome vision of social and political relations" and a "candyfloss approach to history". That his outlook is a narrow 'post-industrial' one is manifest in Bright's view that *Daens* is "about the Past with a large 'P'", a time we can reflect upon as having been "relatively simple" in comparison with "our comfortable, if rather complicated and confusing lives".

Bright has missed, or deliberately misrepresented, the point. Why does he think that films such as *Daens* and *Germinal* are suddenly being made at this time? The impetus for such movies is not the nostalgia of the well-heeled 'post-industrial' society, but rather the relevance of crisis-ridden late nineteenth-century capitalism to crisis-ridden late twentieth-century capitalism.

Not only do the conditions of work and life described in Louis Paul Boon's and Emile Zola's novels exist today in Bangkok and Mexico City, but workers in Belgium and France, currently experiencing the harsh realities of class society, can relate to the timelessness of the class relations depicted in *Daens* and *Germinal*. The point about Coninx's film, as with *Germinal*, is that it shows that the workers' struggle, or the bourgeoisie's fear of it, is what leads to improvements in working and living conditions for workers – rather than some invisible epochal post-modern change.

For the likes of Martin Bright, class struggle may be a historical curiosity which, at best, offers some entertaining conflict, and at worst cinema which is just too "black and white". For others, the "monochrome vision" of "gendarmes... hacking down unarmed demonstrators with their swords" will conjure up not only thoughts of the Peterloo Massacre in Victorian England, but also memories of the slaughter in Tiananmen Square and the battle in Trafalgar Square between unarmed demonstrators against the Poll Tax and riot police.

Many things change, much stays the same. Thanks are due to film-makers such as Stijn Coninx and Claude Berri for keeping alive the history we are still living.

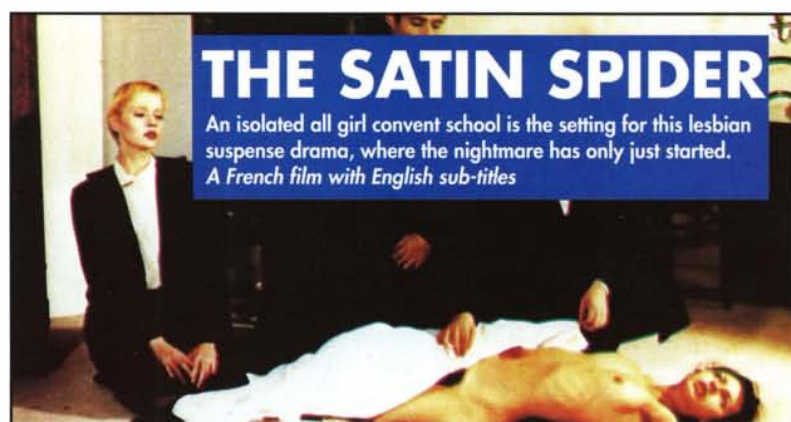
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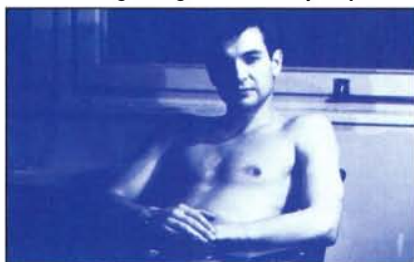
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